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# Anselm on Freedom

KATHERIN ROGERS

# ANSELM ON FREEDOM

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To Sophie, Jeannie, Pat, and  
Nick. Be good.

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# Introduction

Can human beings have morally significant freedom if, as the classical theism of thinkers like Augustine and Aquinas holds, God is sovereign and the source of all created things? Yes, responds Anselm of Canterbury, and sets out to prove it in the careful analytic style which he pioneered. In doing so he becomes the first Christian philosopher (perhaps the first philosopher?) to attempt a systematic, libertarian analysis of freedom. Anselm's work offers viable solutions to some of the puzzles which have plagued Christian philosophers since the days of Augustine and which are still hotly debated today. Is there

room for human freedom in a universe in which God sustains all created beings in existence from moment to moment? If grace is both necessary and unmerited, is there a role for human agency in salvation? Can divine foreknowledge and human freedom be reconciled? If morally significant freedom is important for human beings, must we say that God, too, deliberates and chooses between open options? Anselm's answers have played almost no role in the contemporary debate over these issues, but they are careful and consistent and deserve a hearing.

This introduction will be devoted to some preliminary remarks and then a brief road map

to the plan of the work. It should be noted at the outset that some hold that a project such as mine, which connects the work of a long-dead philosopher to philosophy in the present, is misguided because inherently anachronistic. The concerns of the medieval philosopher, it is argued, are so different from those of the contemporary philosopher that it is a mistake to suppose that they are addressing similar questions. The only way to answer this criticism as it might be raised against my argument in the present work is to offer a close and careful analysis of Anselm's writing, as I try to do throughout. Thus I have frequently included Anselm's original Latin. This is

especially important because I contend that, on the issue of free will, all of the English editions of his work contain misleading translations.

Happily for the interpreter of Anselm, the job of textual analysis is made easier by the fact that Anselm wrote only a limited number of philosophical treatises and does not seem to change his mind significantly over the course of his philosophical career. And so, unlike the Augustine scholar, I do not have to worry about an ‘early’ as opposed to a ‘late’ Anselm. Instead I can appeal to the entire philosophical corpus to illuminate any given text.

I grant that some of the terminology I shall employ is

anachronistic. Certainly Anselm did not use the modern terms ‘determinism’, ‘compatibilism’, or ‘libertarianism’. Moreover, these terms are assigned a variety of meanings and definitions in the contemporary literature. Thus, it is vital to be very clear on the meaning of these words as used in the present work. The first task, then, in making the case that Anselm has much to offer the contemporary philosopher, should be an analysis of how these terms are to be understood.

What Anselm, and I take it most of us who concern ourselves with the question of human freedom, are chiefly concerned about is how to assess the phenomenon of morally significant choice, if

indeed there is such a thing. So I shall focus not on actions in general, but rather on choices. I shall understand a ‘determined’ choice to be one which is causally necessitated by factors outside of the agent. By ‘outside’ I mean that these factors cannot ultimately be identified with the agent, the conscious, self-aware being who does the deliberating and choosing. So, if the mad neuro-surgeon who is such a ubiquitous character in the contemporary free will literature should implant a chip in your brain by which he causes you to choose A over B, your choice for A is determined. If the mad neuro-surgeon should implant a chip by which he causes you to

have desires which cause you to choose A in that, given these desires you are inevitably drawn to A and cannot fail to choose it, your choice for A is determined.

*[Adopting Aristotelian concepts, the first situation might be read as an instance of efficient causality. An external agent simply moves the will. The second situation could be read as an instance of final causality in that the external agent supplies the desires, and then it is the desire for something which moves the will. This distinction is important and interesting. None the less, both situations fall squarely under the definition of determinism as I have defined it, and both pose the same problem for moral responsibility.]*

This is the case even if these implanted desires are ordered in a hierarchy such that you have a first

order desire for A, and then a second order desire to possess a first order desire for A. No matter how complex the system of desire, if the desires are ultimately given to you by the mad neuro-surgeon in such a way that you inevitably choose A, then your choice is determined. And if the mad neuro-surgeon should implant a chip which causes, in addition to your desires, a process of judging which leads you inevitably to choose A, your choice for A is determined. Although the causal chain grows in the examples above, and although it comes to include your desires, your hierarchically ordered desires, and your judgment, since it is a causal chain which can be traced back

ultimately to the mad neuro-surgeon, the choice which is its inevitable effect is determined. If we replace the mad neuro-surgeon with a blind nature, or with God, the choice is still determined.

On my understanding, a determining cause need not precede a choice temporally to render the choice determined. So, for example, if the mad neurosurgeon should cause the choice simultaneously with the choice's occurrence, the choice is none the less determined. It is important to note this, since some definitions of determinism state that a determining cause is one which temporally precedes a choice.

Nor does my understanding of determinism require that the determining cause be an event in the natural world. This sets my view at odds with that of some contemporary philosophers of religion. Hugh McCann, for example, holds that God immediately causes us to exist along with everything about us, including our choices. On McCann's understanding, some of our choices are not determined by any preceding, natural causes. McCann goes on to propose that these choices, though caused by God, are free in a libertarian sense. On my understanding these choices are determined. They are determined although God's causal activity is simultaneous with the

existence of the choice, and although God's causal activity consists in keeping the choosing agent in being. To cite another example: Eleonore Stump notes that it was always Augustine's view that God is the ultimate first cause of everything, including human choices. She says that this point can be bracketed, and argues that the early Augustine ought to be considered a libertarian of some stripe. My understanding of determinism would not allow this setting aside of the question of whether or not a choice is ultimately caused by God. If God is the ultimate first cause of your choice, then your choice is determined.

What if we replace the mad

neuro-surgeon, or a blind nature, or God, with a causal necessity exerted on a choice by the character of the agent himself? I follow Anselm in holding that whether or not the choice should be considered determined in that instance will depend upon whether or not the agent's character is ultimately caused by the agent himself, or is traceable to something outside the agent. Anselm argues that the scope for an agent to create his own character is narrow, in the sense that his options are limited by a nature given by God. And yet there are options, and it is ultimately up to the created agent to form his character through choice. When a choice is caused by

the agent's character, for which the agent can be said to bear the ultimate responsibility, then the choice is not determined. The choice is not, in the final analysis, necessitated by anything outside of the agent. This question will be dealt with at length in Chapter 4.

Note that my understanding of 'determinism' is non-standard within the contemporary literature. For one thing, it does not include or assume universal causation in nature. If all of nature is determined, then, barring a miracle, so are your choices. But even if it is not the case that all of nature is determined, your choice may be. For example suppose, as McCann hypothesizes, that your choice is not determined by

natural necessitating causes, but that God causes it. On my understanding your choice is determined. Moreover, there may be indeterminism in the history of a determined choice. Suppose your choice is caused by the indeterminate motion of a subatomic particle in your brain. Unless we can somehow identify you, the conscious agent, with the particle in question, I take it that your choice is determined, in that it is causally necessitated by something which is ‘outside’ yourself in the relevant sense. Or say that God makes a non-determined choice to cause you to choose A. Your choice for A is determined, although there is indeterminacy in its causal history.

I adopt this understanding of determinism because it seems to me that any instance of choice which is causally necessitated by factors outside of the agent, whatever those factors may be, raises the key question: can the agent be held morally responsible for a choice of which the ultimate cause lies outside himself?

I shall understand by ‘compatibilism’ the view that answers ‘yes’ to that question. There are many types of compatibilism. I shall be discussing two: what I shall call ‘standard compatibilism’; and what I shall call ‘theist compatibilism’. One could subscribe to one or the other or both or neither. In this work

Augustine will be taken as a proponent of both, while Anselm will deny both. Standard compatibilism is the view that human choices are causally necessitated by temporally preceding causes, such as desires, which did not ultimately originate in the agent. The desires may have originated from a blind nature or perhaps from God, such that standard compatibilism could be subdivided into ‘naturalist standard compatibilism’ and ‘theist standard compatibilism’. The point is that the choice is the necessary product of preceding causes for which the agent is not responsible. And yet, according to the standard compatibilist, the human agent is sufficiently free to

be held morally responsible. I apply the term ‘standard’ because in its purely naturalistic version it is quite common today. Theist compatibilism holds that human choices are caused *immediately* by God. That is, God simply and directly causes the choice itself. But again, the theist compatibilist holds that the human agent is sufficiently free to be held morally responsible.

Augustine is both a standard compatibilist and a theist compatibilist. He focuses mainly on the former, and sounds very like contemporary standard compatibilists when he explains that the sort of necessity which conflicts with freedom and responsibility is exemplified by

external coercion. Such necessity forces you to do something against your will, and of course you cannot be praised or blamed for what you did not choose to do. But if you yourself choose to do something, it cannot be against your will. And if you do something willingly, then it is done freely and responsibly. True, the choice may follow inevitably from your judgement and desires, and your judgement and desires are causally traceable to factors outside of yourself. But still, you did the judging based on your desires, so you are free and morally responsible. Augustine develops this standard compatibilist view at length, but he also subscribes to the specifically theist form of

compatibilism. He holds that all that has being is caused immediately by God. This includes the choices made by created agents. God is the immediate first cause of your choices, none the less you make them, and you are responsible.

Augustine sees two central advantages to this analysis of freedom over the view that there is no cause for a free choice beyond the agent's choosing. The latter thesis had been suggested to Augustine, though not systematically developed, by the Pelagian Julian of Eclanum. One advantage is philosophical. The compatibilist position, in both the standard and theist version, allows that the free choice is subject to a

causal explanation and hence intelligible. There is, in Augustine's eyes, a second, theological advantage. The compatibilist position, while not denying freedom and responsibility to created agents, none the less allows the ascription of absolute sovereignty to God. God, in Augustine's view, is the immediate cause of all, and hence everything that happens, including all free choice, is the result of God's will.

But at this point, in the universe of classical theism, the compatibilist position runs up against the reality of sin. If we do not want to say that God is the cause of sin, then we must hold that the choice for sin originates in

the creature. Anselm recognizes this. Though he is greatly influenced by Augustine in other contexts, he parts company with his predecessor and takes a different, libertarian, tack. I shall understand ‘libertarianism’ to involve two key principles. One is that free choice involves alternative possibilities. The created agent must be confronted with open options such that there is nothing, outside the agent’s own choosing, causally or otherwise determining a libertarian free choice. It is true to say before, during, and after the choice, ‘I could do/have done otherwise.’

But the bare presence of alternatives is insufficient for libertarian freedom, as I noted

above in discussing how a determined choice may have indeterminism in its history. The second criterion is that a libertarian free choice must ultimately originate in, or be caused by, the agent himself. It is important here to emphasize the term ‘ultimately’. Some recent philosophers deny both of the criteria I take to be central to libertarianism and advance positions which they label ‘modified libertarianism’ or ‘modest libertarianism’. These philosophers hold that an agent can be free in a libertarian sense, in that his choices come ‘from himself’, so long as they are the result of his own process of reasoning. They grant, though,

that the reasoning process and its conclusion may be the necessary causal results of factors outside of the agent. It seems to me unhelpful to label such views ‘libertarian’. Since, on these accounts, the agent does not choose between open options, and the reasoning process which leads inevitably to the one possible choice is the result of causes outside of the agent, I take this to be a form of determinism. My use of the term ‘libertarian’ will intend only ‘unmodified’ or ‘immodest’ libertarianism, where the agent has open options and the choice is not ultimately caused by something outside himself. It is this second libertarian principle which takes precedence in Anselm’s thought.

The human being is made in the image of God, and the real point of human freedom is that we should have a measure, however small and reflected, of true independence. Only then can we mirror the divine by being good on our own.

Libertarians today usually agree that free choice must be ‘self-caused’ or ‘agent-caused’ in some way, but there is disagreement as to what that entails. One key question is, should the libertarian posit some special sort of causation, unique to human free choice, or should he aim to explain the thesis that choice truly originates with the agent, appealing only to the entities and events postulated by

the sciences to explain natural phenomena in general?

[*Robert Kane attempts to steer the latter course; The Significance of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 116–17; ‘Introduction: The Contours of Contemporary Free Will Debates’, in R. Kane (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3–41, see p. 26.]

Anselm is committed to the position that human beings are unique among animals. Just as rationality is not found in the lower animals, neither is free will.

[*The medievals did not deny that lower animals are conscious and capable of cognition. What animals cannot do is grasp universal principles. One way to put it is that, while animals do understand enough to get by, they do not do science.*]

Although Anselm feels the pressure to try to make libertarian free choice intelligible, he would not see any need to make it intelligible through principles equally applicable to the non-human universe. He takes it that human beings are in fact 'special', and a theory which denied that fact would be misguided. He clearly defends the view that free choice must be self-caused. And he makes some attempt to show how a self-caused choice can be intelligible. But he does not say enough to allow for an interpretation which would ascribe to him one of the several, detailed, and complex contemporary versions of

self-causation over another. His purpose is to solve the puzzles regarding freedom and divine sovereignty with which he is confronted, and he says enough about self-causation to do that job.

That Anselm, in discussing the freedom of created agents, insists on both of these libertarian criteria may seem unlikely to those familiar with his definition of ‘free choice’. He deliberately rejects a definition that would see free choice as the ability to sin or not, and says instead that free choice is the ‘power to keep rightness of will for its own sake’. This definition does not seem to express *either* libertarian principle. And so some scholars have held that Anselm could not be a

libertarian, or that he presents conflicting analyses of freedom. But as he unpacks the definition and explains what is required for freedom, it becomes clear that both of the criteria are necessary for created free will and that his analysis is both libertarian and consistent. The ‘power’ in question must genuinely belong to the agent. If the created agent ‘keeps’ rightness of will through necessitating causes, including his own desires, which arise from outside of himself, then he is not free. Thus the power in question entails self-caused choice.

What of alternative possibilities? It would seem, as Anselm works towards his definition, that they are *not* required. God, who cannot

choose between good and evil, is certainly free. He keeps rightness of will through His own power, without the possibility of losing it. He does not have options and yet He is free. The conclusion then seems to be that the sort of freedom that Anselm has in mind does not require alternative possibilities. And it is true that alternative possibilities are not necessary for the freedom *of God*. God, then, does not have libertarian freedom. But this is because God exists *a se*, from Himself, completely independent of any other being. Human beings are not like that. Human beings exist in total dependence upon God, such that all of their abilities and all of their desires are from

God. How could such a creature possibly have any power on its own? It could, says Anselm, only if it were endowed by its creator with alternative and competing desires such that, on its own, it could throw rightness away or cling to it. Since we have the ability to throw rightness away, we truly, and from ourselves, have the power to keep it. Anselm offers a robust and systematic libertarian analysis of *created* freedom. But created freedom and divine freedom, though both fall under the general definition of ‘free will’, differ in a significant way. While self-caused choice is essential for both, alternative possibilities are necessary only for the creature.

I have been discussing Anselm’s

theories regarding human free will. In fact, much of his central argument occurs in *De casu diaboli*. The contemporary reader may find it odd that Anselm would focus on the will of Satan. Whatever one's view of the Heavenly Host and their fallen brethren, it should be appreciated that Anselm chooses to discuss the fall of the devil from the best analytic motives. He is interested only in morally significant choice, and he is deeply concerned to get to the bare metaphysics of free will. He prefers to set aside instances of choice where the core act is difficult to discern, being encrusted with layers of competing desires born of years of lived history. He wants to examine

a pure instance of choice, and he wants to put the central and most difficult puzzle of created freedom in the starker terms: how could a being made perfectly good, with no one and nothing already evil in the world to tempt him, possibly choose against the will of God? Admittedly something is lost through this method. There is a sort of unreality to the ‘pristine’ choice which may make it difficult to map onto complex human experience. None the less, an examination of the idealized instance, stripped of its particularity, seems a valuable, indeed necessary, step in an analysis which aims to get to the metaphysical heart of free will.

That Anselm focuses on the

angelic will might lead one to suppose that his analysis in some way assumes that choice is the action of an immaterial mind or soul. Sadly, Anselm died before he got the chance to work on the treatise which he had hoped to write on the nature and origin of the soul. It is probably safe to suppose that he is a dualist of an Augustinian stripe: soul and body are distinct and separable, but both are necessary components of the complete human being. However, there is nothing in his analysis of free will which presupposes or requires dualism. If, as some say, all of the phenomena which seem to fall under the heading of the mental can be explained as actions of the

physical body, this would not impact his views one way or the other, unless the physicalist position itself entails a denial of libertarianism.

And so to a sketch of the argument of the book. In the first chapter I set out Anselm's version of classical theism. This is crucial because his understanding of the nature of God and the relationship of God to creation is very different from that of many contemporary philosophers of religion, and this has an impact on his analysis of created freedom. For example, it is very common nowadays to suppose that there are true propositions which exist as platonistic abstracta independently of God. Anselm

(and Augustine and Aquinas) reject this view as inconsistent with divine omnipotence. On this *traditional*, classical theism all that there is is God and what He has made. Thus Molinism, for example, cannot be considered in Anselm's system, since it posits a realm of 'middle knowledge', that is, true propositions about what any possible free agent would do in any possible situation, which exists independently of God. Clearly it is important at the beginning to explain Anselm's basic, non-negotiable presuppositions about the nature of God and the relationship of God to creation.

In this chapter I also discuss Anselm's analysis of language used

to speak of God. For Anselm, analytic thinker that he is, defining terms and unpacking and distinguishing their various possible meanings plays a key role. Thus it is important to appreciate how he understands our words to apply to God. This is especially interesting because he very consciously defends univocity as opposed to some version of analogy, and this plays a role in his definition and analysis of ‘free choice’. The chapter also includes discussion of Anselm’s understanding of the relationship of God to the moral order. Anselm, like Augustine before him and Aquinas later, rejects both horns of the Euthyphro dilemma. God neither conforms

to nor invents the moral order. Rather His very nature is the standard for value. And again, this point is crucially important for Anselm's understanding of freedom, since it is key to establishing how created and divine freedom are similar enough to fall under the same definition of 'free choice' yet very different in terms of how each meets the requirements of the definition. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Anselm's views on the nature of evil with a word about the problem of evil. Since the sort of created freedom which concerns him is morally significant freedom, the choice between good and evil, it is necessary to say something about what the evil

option might entail. It is also worthwhile to note that the evil of suffering, which seems to be the major consideration in contemporary philosophy of religion, is not the focus of Anselm's attention, although he does have some interesting things to say about it.

In Chapter 2 I discuss the state of the question of free will as it is found in Augustine. From time to time I shall mention comparisons with other historical figures, but Augustine's presence will loom largest. I take it that Anselm deliberately set himself the task of correcting difficulties bequeathed by Augustine, so an appreciation of the pre-Anselm history of the question is extremely important

for both the historical and the philosophical aims of this work. I intend to show that Anselm is the first Christian philosopher to offer a systematic, libertarian analysis of created freedom, and to make the case it is necessary to look at his predecessors. Augustine, I shall argue, does offer a systematic analysis of human freedom, but it is a compatibilist one. The only important philosophers in the Latin West between Augustine and Anselm are Boethius and Eriugena. The latter may be a libertarian, but he does not offer a systematic analysis, while the former is neither systematic nor libertarian. Philosophically it is helpful to see how free will is treated in the work of Anselm's

predecessors. In order to argue that Anselm is trying to solve the problems which Augustine bequeathed to European Christendom, it is crucial to get very clear on what those problems are.

Augustine's work had a huge impact on Anselm. It is safe to say that on the central questions of epistemology and on many metaphysical issues Anselm is an Augustinian. But he departs in a very significant way from the work of his predecessor when it comes to human freedom and the relationship of creature to Creator. In Chapter 2, I argue that on the question of the basic workings of the free will Augustine is a compatibilist. He holds that we are

responsible for our choices and yet our choices are caused by God. For Augustine God can be said to cause human choices in two ways. First, God is the cause of the desires which cause the choice. This is the aspect which Chapter 2 will focus on. In saying this, Augustine sounds very like contemporary standard compatibilists who hold that the agent is free if he is able to follow his desires, even if those desires are caused by something outside himself. But Augustine also holds, though perhaps less obviously, that God is the immediate cause of choices in that it is God who gives existence to all things from moment to moment. I discuss this point at length in Chapter 6.

I take it that, though Augustine's analysis of free will changes over time, he is none the less a compatibilist, early and late. And, although he holds that the pre-lapsarian will differs from the post-lapsarian will, he offers a compatibilist analysis of the will in both circumstances. This is a difficult position in that it invests ultimate causality only in God, which means that the causes of sin are traceable back to the Creator. The problems with Augustine's position occasioned bitter disagreement in and shortly after his own day. There was debate over various permutations of Pelagianism as against Augustine's conclusion that divine grace works in such a way that the human will,

while free in the compatibilist sense, does not have any self-determining role to play in salvation. This debate simmered down over time, after the (philosophically speaking) inconclusive pronouncements of the Council of Orange in the sixth century. It flared up again in the ugly and divisive Predestination Controversy in the ninth century. This intellectual battle, too, was ended by metaphysically vague conciliar edict which did not address the fundamental philosophical issues generating the problems. Church councils, of course, are not in the business of metaphysics, so it is not surprising that their conclusions fail to satisfy on a philosophical level. But

without going back to the root of the problem, which lies in the basic analysis of the workings of free will, the theological difficulties cannot really be settled. And here is where Anselm, combining philosophical depth and analytic clarity, comes on the scene.

Chapters 3 — 5 set out Anselm's analysis of free will. In answer to the question 'Why did God give us free will?', Anselm answers that it allows us to choose the good on our own, which is how we become closer images of the divine. He derives his definition of free will from this purpose. Free will is 'the power to keep justice' and 'justice' is 'rightness of will kept for its own

sake'. He explains that what is unique about rational agents is not that they will, nor even that they can will rightly, that is, in accord with the plan that God has in mind for the creature. Lower animals can do the same. What sets us apart is that we can step back from our desires and choose to endorse those that correspond to God's plan. Thus Anselm prefigures Harry Frankfurt's analysis of what it takes to distinguish the genuine 'person' from other willing and desiring beings.

This interpretation is important in understanding Anselm's basic views on ethics. Because he explains that the choice which confronts the rational, created

agent is between what is just and what is beneficial, Anselm has almost always been taken to espouse a sort of proto-Kantianism: the virtuous person is the one who chooses duty over the opposing options of self-interest and natural inclination. This is a mistake. Anselm holds that no one wills anything unless he believes it will make him happy. The options are between choosing, on one's own, to moderate one's desires such that the benefits one pursues are those that accord with God's will, which is what Anselm means by 'justice', or choosing to will in an inordinate manner whatever one happens to desire. Thus Anselm accepts the eudaemonism which is

standard in the Middle Ages, at least from the time of Augustine up through Aquinas in the mid-thirteenth century.

The fourth chapter makes the case that Anselm is indeed a libertarian as regards created free will. The created agent must have the alternative possibilities of choosing justice (properly ordered benefits) or mere (disordered) benefits. If the agent had only one motivation, since that motivation is caused by God, it would make its choices by necessity, not freely such that it merits praise and blame. It is only the fact that the created agent can reject justice by choosing the wrong benefit that renders the agent free, that is someone with the power to ‘keep’

justice. The power must belong to the agent himself, and unless he could reject justice, he would be willing rightly by necessity.

From this analysis it is clear that the open options serve a purpose beyond simply enabling a choice. The point of alternatives is to permit the creature a measure of aseity, of self-caused choice. I argue that Anselm ascribes to the created agent the elevated metaphysical status of being a ‘primary’ agent. Compatibilist philosophers like Augustine (I note that Aquinas, too, seems to be in this camp) hold that rational creatures are free agents, but they analyze created agency along the lines of secondary causation in general. Augustine and Aquinas

hold that all creatures are endowed by their Creator with real causal powers, but they, and all their properties, and all their acts, are also immediately caused by God. Certainly it is correct to say that it is the fire that causes the cotton to burn. But it is equally correct to say that God causes the cotton to burn, and since God is the originating cause keeping everything in being from moment to moment, God is the primary cause, while the fire is merely a caused cause, and hence secondary. Both Augustine and Aquinas propose analyses of created freedom which see the created agent's choice as caused by himself, but also caused in a more fundamental and ultimate way by

God.

Anselm parts company with Augustine and Aquinas. He holds that, although all that has genuine ontological status is kept in being by God, it is up to the created agent to choose between options. If he should sin, he is himself the cause of the choice. And since he could sin, if he chooses to cling to the good given by God he does so on his own. Anselm does not use the term, but I take it that this aseity can be labeled a sort of ‘primary’ agency. To be sure it is not like the divine agency which brings things into being *ex nihilo*. And yet, in however limited and dimly reflected a way, human agency has a measure of independence, and it is this which

makes the created rational agent a true *imago dei*.

Chapter 5 addresses the difficult question of the causes of sin: what could possibly cause a rational creature, made good by God, to choose to reject the good given by his Creator? We can grasp the motivation to some extent in that the created agent always chooses what he believes will make him happy, and he might well find the wrong benefits attractive. But on Anselm's analysis the rational agent is also given a desire for justice, and he is free to follow it and restrain his inappropriate desires. So an explanation in terms of motive does not fully explain the cause of sin. Augustine had said that 'nothing' was the cause of

sin, but he goes on to allow to his ‘nothing’ a sort of power which might have the effect of drawing the creature downward to the lesser and lower. Anselm will have none of that. The ‘nothingness’ of evil is the *product* of sin, not its cause. Nor can the mere ability to choose be the cause of sin, since some rational agents exercise that ability in the direction of clinging to the good. In the final analysis Anselm feels required to say that there is no cause for the choice beyond the actual choosing.

And this introduces what is probably the most serious difficulty with libertarianism known today as the ‘intelligibility problem’. If there is no cause for our choosing one option over the

other, then isn't the choice really just a sort of inexplicable accident for which the agent cannot be held responsible? Anselm does not address the problem directly, but he is clearly uncomfortable with his conclusion that there is no cause for the free choice. I propose several arguments, based on Anselmian premises, to try to mitigate the difficulty somewhat. First, Anselm's discussion of how the will chooses based on the two inclinations, for justice and for benefit, sounds very like the thesis of 'plural voluntary control' which Robert Kane, a contemporary libertarian, has proposed to deal with the intelligibility problem. That is, the person involved in a moral dilemma is struggling to

achieve two incompatible goals, so that, whichever should win out, it is true to say that the choice comes from the person and represents a consequence of that person's character.

A second response to the intelligibility problem requires noting that it is crucial to Anselm's theory that praise and blame are not ascribed to an agent because of a pre-existent character which is somehow expressed in a choice. On the contrary, it is the choices that we make that create our characters for which we are subsequently responsible. A final response trades on this notion of self-creation. Many critics of libertarianism take the intelligibility problem to prove

that the view is absurd in that it ascribes to human beings the impossible ability to be god-like, unmoved movers. But in Anselm's eyes this is not a failing in the analysis. Rather, allowing for aseity and self-creation is the whole point of freedom. God does indeed make us in His own image. Thus, while Anselm grants that libertarian freedom entails a certain irreducible element of mystery with respect to human choice, it is exactly the mystery one would expect to find given the relationship of creature to Creator.

Chapters 6—9 deal with Anselm's solutions to some of the puzzles, bequeathed by Augustine and still troubling philosophers of religion to the present day, of how

to square free created agency with the power and knowledge of God. Chapter 6 is concerned with the most fundamental of these issues. If all that has ontological status is made and sustained by God, how can there be any room for created aseity? Anselm responds that it is indeed the case that all that exists comes from God, including all the elements of a free choice. The agent, the agent's desires and motivations, even the choice as a sort of act, are kept in being by God. What is entirely up to the agent, struggling with a moral choice, is which of his desires will actually 'win out'. But this 'winning out' is not some new *thing*. It is simply the final success of one God-given desire over

another. And if the choice is for sin, then the evil is caused by the free agent. But this evil is just the absence of the justice that ought to have been there. It has no ontological status and so is not caused by God.

This solution to the puzzle does entail that there are events in our world which are not caused by God. He permits them, but He would genuinely prefer that they not happen. Anselm is adamant that sin is against the will of God. This conclusion will be insupportable for those who hold that God must be absolutely in control of all that happens. But there are only two options here. Either God controls everything and is the cause of sin, or He is not

the cause of sin, and so does not control everything. Anselm takes both the reality of sin and the goodness of God to be non-negotiable, and so he must opt for the view that creatures have a robust enough causal power of their own to choose against the will of God.

Chapter 7 addresses the question of grace and free will in our fallen world. If, as Augustine had insisted, and as the Church subsequently confirmed, grace is absolutely necessary for salvation and cannot in any way be merited, where is there any role for human agency? A brief overview of the Pelagian controversy helps to set the stage here. Augustine argues that, in addition to being necessary

and unmerited, grace is irresistible. He holds that this does not undermine the role of the human will. On his compatibilist view the will can be drawn irresistibly while remaining free, since it is choosing through its own, God-given, desires. The Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians, on the other hand, struggled to insert some factor in the schema which would allow the human agent to initiate the process of his salvation. There are interesting and important differences between the Pelagians and the Semi-Pelagians, but, at least from the perspective of what became the established orthodoxy of the Church, they all make the unacceptable move of supposing that some good choice could

originate with the fallen, human being before it receives the grace of God. Anselm's solution avoids any suspicion of Pelagianism of any sort, while it maintains his libertarian stance which grants to the human, and in this case, fallen, agent some role in its destiny. Grace is both necessary and unmerited. There is, however, a sense in which it is not irresistible. Free choice enters the scene only after grace has been offered to the fallen creature. God graciously restores the desire for justice which is what was lost to humanity in the Fall. But the human agent can then choose to cling to this justice, or, by choosing the wrong benefit, can reject it. Again, all that has being and goodness in this

story of salvation comes from God. None the less the created agent is free to throw away the good it has received, and that means that if it should hold fast to the grace it has been given, there is a sense in which it does so on its own, and hence is deserving of praise.

Chapters 8 and 9 deal with the perennial dilemma of how to square human freedom with divine foreknowledge, paying special attention to how theories of time and divine eternity affect the issue. Chapter 8 discusses the problem in the context of some contemporary attempts to solve the dilemma and offers some historical background to Anselm's approach. Chapter 9 explains

Anselm's solution to the problem with a discussion of his acceptance of the 'four-dimensionalist' theory of time. The dilemma, as it has come down to us from Augustine, is roughly this: if God knows today what I will choose tomorrow, then, come tomorrow, I cannot possibly choose otherwise. My choice seems to be necessary, and so not free.

In the contemporary debate, the two main opponents are the Molinists and the Open Theists. The latter simply deny that God knows future free choices. Anselm is unequivocally committed to the view that God has foreknowledge, and so he must reject Open Theism. He cannot accept the Molinist solution, either. Molinism

posites an entire framework of propositions about contingent phenomena existing independently of God to which God must conform His plans. This conflicts in a fundamental way with Anselm's traditional, classical theism. Anselm takes a different approach and offers what is arguably the best statement of the 'eternalist' solution, a solution that has been widely dismissed in the contemporary literature as fundamentally inadequate. Chapter 9, then, is an effort to rehabilitate what is perhaps the only viable solution to the foreknowledge-freedom dilemma available to the proponent of Anselm's brand of classical

theism.

Anselm reconciles libertarian freedom with divine foreknowledge by developing the notion of ‘consequent’ necessity. This is a necessity that *follows from* the positing of an event, and so it could not possibly conflict with the occurrence of the event. But God’s foreknowledge occurs before the free choice, so how could the necessity attached to it be a consequent necessity? Anselm answers this question with an analysis of the nature of time. To my knowledge he is the first philosopher to propose a clearly four-dimensionalist (sometimes termed ‘eternalist’ or ‘tenseless’) theory of time: all of time, what is past, present, and future, relative

to our limited, temporal perspective, is in fact equally existent. If God transcends the spatio-temporal universe, then all of time, like all of space, is equally present to God. Augustine and Boethius, as I note in Chapter 8, both offered suggestions in this direction, but neither developed the position with anything approaching systematic clarity. And since both Augustine and Boethius are compatibilists, neither allows the conclusion to which Anselm argues: if our yesterday, today, and tomorrow are equally ‘now’ for God, then God knows today what we do tomorrow as a result of ‘observing’ our doing it. Thus it is consequent necessity which

attaches to divine foreknowledge. It is non-determining, and in fact originates with the actual choice of the free agent. Augustine and Boethius (and Aquinas later) could not allow that human choices have any sort of effect upon God at all, but Anselm takes this to be the necessary consequence of God's having created free creatures who can act as primary agents. Anselm's doctrine of created freedom thus elevates the human agent to a metaphysical status far above that allowed within the standard medieval versions of classical theism.

If, according to Anselm, morally significant freedom is so important for a created agent, and if alternative options are necessary

for morally significant freedom, then must it not be the case that God, too, in order to be free in some meaningful sense, must deliberate between options and be able to do otherwise than He does? Chapter 10 addresses Anselm's answer, which is an emphatic 'No!' God's nature is the absolute standard for value, and it is logically impossible that He should choose to sin. So of course He does not have morally significant freedom. Nor could He do the good, but somehow fail to do the best. God is the best and He does the best. Aquinas agrees, but then adds that 'the best' divine act could issue in any number of alternative possible effects. When the question is the creation of our

world, Aquinas holds that God might have made any number of other, different, worlds, or might simply have not created any world at all. There is just no reason why perfect goodness should issue in the actual world. But this seems to introduce an uncomfortable arbitrariness at the heart of the relationship between creature and Creator.

Anselm, on the other hand, takes it that there is one best effect of the best cause, and so God does not deliberate and choose between open options. And yet He is free. Freedom is the ‘power to keep justice for its own sake’. The created agent, existing *per aliud*, can be said to possess this power only if it can choose justice *on its*

*own.* And since the created agent has nothing it has not received from God, the ability to choose justice on its own must be constituted by the power to cling to the received good, in the face of the real option to throw it away. So options are requisite for created freedom. But God exists entirely *per se*. He is what He is from Himself, and open options have no role at all to play in His perfect possession of justice. And so there is an answer to the question of why God has made things as they are: He does the best and, setting aside whatever evil is due to created freedom, our world is it.

The sort of traditional, classical theism to which Anselm

subscribes, which sees God as eternal, immutable, and the immediate sustaining source of all that is not Himself, is widely rejected in contemporary philosophy of religion. Among the reasons for this rejection is the claim that there is no room for creatures with libertarian freedom in a universe made by such a God. And many earlier classical theists, most notably Augustine, agree. Anselm sets himself the task of explaining how the God of traditional, classical theism might leave space in the world for created agents to make their own choices and so, rather than being God's slaves, may become His children.

# 1: Anselm's Classical Theism

## CREATOR AND CREATURE

Anselm is a traditional, classical theist. ‘Classical theism’ has come to mean the view that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent.

Anselm’s version of classical theism, what I am calling *traditional*, classical theism, accepts these three properties, but sees God as more absolute than would many contemporary philosophers of religion who count themselves among the classical theists. Like other great medieval Christian thinkers such as Augustine and Aquinas, Anselm believes that all there is in the universe is God and

what God has made. God is the absolute Creator in that He does not bring the world into being out of any pre-existent entities at all. Not only is there no primal matter out of which He makes things, but there are no independently existing abstracta; that is, there is no world of Platonic forms, or properties, or necessary truths, or propositions of any sort, existing independently of God. God is perfect being and all truths of what is possible or necessary are derived from the nature of God in one way or another. The details of that derivation differ from traditional, classical theist to traditional, classical theist and will not figure prominently in our analysis of Anselmian freedom.

The non-negotiable point is that whatever has any positive ontological status at all is God or comes from God. God's creative activity is radically different from human creation. Even were the human being to have the power to make something appear by wishing, the properties defining the humanly created object are rooted in the nature of God, and so the human creator, unlike the divine, must work with elements already present outside himself.

Traditional, classical theism holds that God's creative act sustains things in being constantly. Were God this instant to stop willing that you should be, you would blink out. So rather than saying that God *made* the world, it

is more accurate to say that He *makes* it. This divine making is identical with divine knowing. Traditional, classical theists hold that God is absolutely simple such that His power and knowledge and goodness are the same. This difficult doctrine can usually be bracketed in a discussion of Anselm's analysis of free will, but it should be noted that it does generate problems which will have to be acknowledged in Chapter 6 and Chapter 10. For example, Anselm, like other traditional, classical theists and perhaps any theist with a very strong doctrine of divine providence, holds that God's knowledge is causal. That is, what God knows, He causes. But then the conclusion seems to

follow that human beings cannot be primary, agent causes, and it is God who causes sin. As Chapter 6 will argue, Anselm devotes considerable effort to reconciling genuine human freedom with God's causal omniscience.

Traditional, classical theism does not necessarily entail occasionalism, the position that God keeps all things in being constantly *and* that created things have no causal powers. For the occasionalist, contrary to appearances, it is not the case that the apparent cause produces the apparent effect. It is God who produces the apparent effect, and not the apparent cause at all. Occasionalism became a prominent issue among Islamic

philosophers when it was ably defended by Algazali and later criticized by Averroes. Christian philosophers after Anselm's day take up the question, though Anselm himself does not address it. Clearly he subscribes to the view that God causes all existents other than Himself immediately, and he assumes that creatures can be causes, so it is safe to suppose that he would agree with later classical theists who insisted on the reality of a creaturely causation immediately sustained and primarily caused by God, a sort of derived or 'secondary' causation. When the fire burns the cotton, God keeps the fire with its properties and the cotton with its properties in being from moment

to moment, and in fact it is true that God causes the whole process. None the less, contrary to the occasionalist understanding, the original characterization of the event as ‘the fire burns the cotton’ was correct.

Probably the best way to assess the relationship of primary (divine) to secondary causation is suggested by Aquinas’s view that the two agents in question belong to different ‘orders’. And a promising (though non-Thomist) analogy for these different orders and their relationship is that of the author and his literary creation. Here there can be two levels of causation: causes that operate within the story; and the ultimate cause of the entire story itself,

including all its constituents. In L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*, a tornado blows Dorothy's house to Oz. Baum is the cause of the events and objects as their author, but it would be a mistake to conclude that it was really Baum and *not the tornado* that caused Dorothy's house to set down among the Munchkins. On one level it was Baum, and on another it was the tornado. Things that God has made have causal powers, although they exist and exercise these powers in absolute dependence on God.

Traditional, classical theists do not deny created agency, but they disagree among themselves on the form that agency takes when it comes to the free will of the

rational creature. In Chapter 2, I shall argue that before Anselm those Christian philosophers who present anything approaching metaphysical accounts of creaturely freedom are either compatibilists or Pelagians. Anselm is the first orthodox Christian philosopher to defend human libertarian freedom and to attempt a developed, metaphysical account of the position.

*[He may well be the first philosopher ever to do this, but only a thorough canvas of ancient and classical philosophy could back up this claim, and such a project lies well outside the aims of the present work.]*

Augustine, arguably the most important Christian philosopher, and certainly the most influential

on Anselm, defends a compatibilist view. Not only does he see human choice as following inevitably from preceding desire, which is standard compatibilism, but he also understands human agency to be a sort of secondary agency, along the lines of secondary causation in general, and so he is a theist compatibilist. The human agent does have the power to make choices, but the agent, the power, and the choices are all caused by God. God immediately, or ‘efficiently’ causes good choices, and, in the case of bad choices, He does not step in to prevent the creature from making the choices to which it is inevitably drawn by its desires. These desires themselves are

immediately caused by God, and the created agent's pursuing them can be understood as a sort of failure or falling away from the good.

Augustine attacks libertarianism with two central arguments: one strictly philosophical; and one based on traditional, classical theism. The strictly philosophical argument is known today as the ‘intelligibility problem’.

*[This is the label used by Robert Kane in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 22–6.]*

If there is no explanation, in terms of some sort of pre-existent reason or motive, for choosing one option over another, then the

choice is unintelligible, a sort of weird accident that happened to the agent. The theological problem is this: if the ultimate cause for the choice is the created agent, then there is something in this world which is not made by God and which is not absolutely under His control, and to say that is to deny God's omnipotence and providence, the foundational principles of traditional, classical theism.

Anselm appreciates Augustine's critique, but cannot accept his view. Rational creatures sin and, according to Anselm as explained in Chapter 5, it is logically impossible that God causes creatures to sin. The choice to sin must arise from the created agent

itself. Though God is the source of all that has positive ontological status, and though He keeps all things in being from moment to moment, Anselm insists that there is space, albeit very narrow, for created, rational agents to work causally in the world with an independence not captured by the notion of secondary causation. True, the fire burns the cotton, but God is causing the fire burning the cotton, and there is nothing in the event not immediately willed by God. Anselm holds that created free will works differently. When the created rational will wills rightly, it makes its own contribution to God's willing the good for the creature. And when it wills wrongly, it is truly on its own.

Anselm's treatment of freedom, which sees the created agent as a sort of reflective primary cause, mirroring the primary agency of God, arises out of his efforts to carve out a genuine domain for created choice in the universe of traditional, classical theism.

## THE PROBLEM OF LANGUAGE

The question of how the limited human being can possibly conceptualize and speak about the divine is perennial in the philosophy of religion. The theist who holds that properties exist independently of God may not find this too serious a difficulty. He might say that there's such a thing as 'goodness', for example,

and humans can have it, and God can have it, too, only more perfectly. The traditional, classical theist has a harder time of it. Since God is the source of all that is not Himself, He cannot represent just another instance of a given perfection. His very nature is the ultimate standard for, and exemplar of, all perfections. Created instances of perfections are the limited and fragmented reflections of God Himself. God simply *is* the perfections which creatures *have*. But then God is good and wise and powerful in a radically different way from that in which a creature might be.

This might lead one to adopt a doctrine of analogy, as did Aquinas. On the analogical view,

the terms we use of creatures and of God bear a related, but not univocal, meaning. Just as the term ‘healthy’ when used of the healthy animal and the term when used of the healthy medicine do not mean the same thing, and yet have a related meaning, the ‘goodness’ of the creature and the ‘goodness’ of God are different but related. Just how different is the subject of debate among scholars of St Thomas. A discussion of this issue lies beyond the scope of the present work, but a mention of a standard problem with the doctrine of analogy is worthwhile to underline the value of Anselm’s very different approach. Suppose the meaning of ‘good’ when applied to the

creature and ‘good’ when applied to God are as different as, or more different from, the meanings of ‘healthy’ when applied to the animal and the medicine. And suppose further, as Thomas does, that we gain our understanding of the meaning of a term from observation of the creature. We could not come to an initial grasp of the health of an animal simply by having healthy medicine pointed out to us. We need to grasp the primary concept of the health of a living body to understand the related meaning when applied to medicine. But with God and creation our grasp of the meaning of a term in the creature is temporally and epistemically prior to our

application of the term to God. And if the goodness of the creature is so different from the goodness of God, it is difficult to see that we can truly move beyond our understanding as it applies to the creature. But if we understand the term with all of the limitations that attach to the creature, it seems that we cannot really use the term correctly of God at all.

Anselm briefly considers, but rejects, a doctrine of analogy, and instead explicitly opts for univocity of meaning in language about God. In spite of the radical difference between Creator and creature, there is an underlying sameness in what the creature merely has and what God is. Part of the metaphysical grounding for

this view is Anselm's acceptance of a strong doctrine of participation standard among Augustinian Neoplatonists. The difficult doctrine of participation need not detain us, but the position that the creature, in however derived and limited a way, can represent an accurate reflection of the divine plays a crucial role in Anselm's analysis of free will. God has made human beings in His image, and His purpose in giving human beings freedom is so that they can work to enhance that image in themselves. Of course, in a sense, all of creation reflects the Creator, but in giving the rational creature freedom, God cedes to it a measure of independence which

makes it God-like in a way which is unique among creatures.

That Anselm is serious in positing a sameness between divine and human agency is evidenced by the fact that the clearest proof texts for his doctrine of univocity come from his discussions on free will. In *De Veritate* Chapter 12, Anselm defines *iustitia*, ‘justice’. This is the term he uses for moral goodness, and injustice, *iniustitia*, for moral wickedness. Ordinarily these terms connote a social or political setting, but I shall follow Anselm and continue to use them for the sort of good and bad he has in mind. Their exact meanings will be the subject of much discussion in Chapter 3. Here we

are concerned with the term ‘justice’ as an instance of how language relevant to free choice can be applied to God and to creatures. Anselm defines ‘justice’ as ‘rightness of will kept for its own sake’, and insists that this can be the correct definition only if it applies to God as well as to creatures. He goes on to argue that it does apply to both, although the distance between creature and Creator is maintained in that God Himself is Justice, and so, whereas the just creature conforms to an external standard, God ‘is really keeping Himself, . . . through Himself. . . . on account of Himself, . . .’

An even more explicit defense of a univocal approach is offered

in the first chapter of *De libertate arbitrii*.

[The term *arbitrium* is usually best translated ‘choice’, but Anselm argues that God has *libertatem arbitrii* although He does not debate between open options, so ‘will’ might be the better translation here, if ‘choice’ is taken to entail options. We shall see that the more standard term for ‘will’, *voluntas*, can mean a number of different things. I shall translate *arbitrium*, *voluntas*, and their cognates as seems most suitable to the text. Fortunately Anselm is a true analytic philosopher who usually takes great care to explain his terms. This diminishes the danger of being led astray by problems of translation.]

Anselm explains that the ability to sin or not to sin cannot be the definition of free choice, since God never could sin and the good

angels cannot now sin, yet we ascribe to both of them ‘freedom of choice’. The student interlocutor suggests that there should be a different definition of ‘free choice’ for God and the good angels on the one hand and human beings on the other. Anselm, however, takes it that the fact that we use the same term presupposes a definition which can fit all the instances of that use.

Although the free choice of men is different from the free choice of God and the good angels, nevertheless the definition of this freedom ought to be the same for both in accordance with the name. Just as, though one animal is different from another, whether substantially or accidentally,

nevertheless the definition is the same for all animals according to the name of ‘animal’.

God imparts His own sort of free choice to the created agent, even though the manner in which that free choice is expressed must differ from one kind of agent to another.

## GOD AND THE MORAL ORDER

On Anselm’s view one of the key differences between divine and created freedom is that, as the absolute source of value, God does not possess what is today called ‘morally significant freedom’. What sort of freedom God *does* have will be the subject of Chapter 10. Creatures, on the

other hand, angels and human beings, in order to have justice ‘from themselves’ and deserve praise and blame, must have morally open options, at least at some point in their careers as agents. Anselm is supremely uninterested in the question of the freedom of indifference, the ability to choose between essentially identical options. He does not ascribe such freedom to God, and, regarding creatures, he states very explicitly that the only sort of freedom of interest is the morally significant freedom required for merit. It will be helpful, then, in order to see how morally significant freedom could be important for created agents but not for God, to grasp the

traditional, classical theist's understanding of the relationship of God to the moral order.

In the universe of traditional, classical theism there are no Platonic forms or abstracta existing independently of God. Thus there cannot be necessary moral truths just 'there' in the world to which God, in His goodness, conforms. Were that the situation, God's independence would be compromised. Further, if God simply recognizes some extrinsically existing set of true ethical propositions and then passes the information along to His creatures, His role is reduced to that of a prophet. The God of traditional, classical theism is the source of the moral order, not just

its messenger.

Is the traditional, classical theist, then, committed to divine command theory? Some later medieval philosophers adopted this view, but it is rejected by Augustine and Anselm and Aquinas. In its pure form, such as that advanced by William of Ockham, divine command theory holds that human beings have but one obligation, which is to obey God. God makes actions obligatory simply by commanding them. For Ockham the point of adopting divine command theory is to preserve divine freedom and omnipotence, so Ockham holds that God can command anything logically possible. God could, *really* could, command us to hate

Him, and were He to do so, that would be what we ought to do.

There are at least two serious problems with this pure form of divine command theory. It should be noted that contemporary philosophers of religion who label their views ‘divine command theories’ tend to be well aware of these problems and try to address them. My own impression is that the more successful they are in answering these problems, the less ‘pure’ a version of divine command theory they present, and the closer they move towards grounding values in the nature of God as do Aquinas and Anselm.

The first major problem with divine command theory, at least in its pure form, is that it makes

morality arbitrary. God might command that we torture small children. And were He to do so we ought to do it. But many of us find that intuitively absurd. We recognize that it is wrong to torture small children with almost the same force and clarity that we recognize that  $2 + 2 = 4$ . We cannot give up our belief that it is wrong to torture small children and a theory that asks us to do so refutes itself.

Anselm is clearly in the camp of those who find the objectivity of moral truths non-negotiable. His first proof for the existence of God at the beginning of his first philosophical work, the *Monologion*, proceeds from our ability to recognize different

degrees of goodness and justice in things. His version of the argument from objective value holds, in good platonistic fashion, that the existence of these disparate values in the world points to a unified and transcendent goodness and justice as their source. If at its heart the truth of morality and values is arbitrary divine fiat, then we make a mistake when we believe we have found objective morality and values in the world. And then we could not argue from the ‘good’ and ‘just’ as we perceive them, to a transcendent source whose perfection they reflect and share.

There is a second difficulty with divine command theory, possibly even more serious for traditional,

classical theists. If good is whatever God commands, and God could command anything logically possible, such that tomorrow rape and robbery and murder might be the good things to do, then the term ‘good’ loses any positive content, even when applied to God. ‘God is good’ means only that God is as He is. The kindest and wisest saint is no closer an image of God than the cruellest child molester. Anselm in *Cur deus homo* Book I, Chapter 12, mentions a version of divine command theory, but, in keeping with his position that we recognize the objectivity of moral truths, he holds that it would impugn the dignity of God were one to suggest that He could will

something unjust and thereby make it right. True, whatever God wills is just, but He does not will anything inappropriate. It is incorrect to argue that it might possibly be just to lie on the basis of the vacuous truth that 'If God were to will to lie, it would be just to lie.' The antecedent is simply an impossibility. One who wills to lie is not God.

God neither conforms to external moral norms, nor does He invent or create the moral order. Rather, His nature is the standard for value. There are various ways in which this relationship might be explained. In Aquinas's terms, God is fully actualized being. When creatures strive to fulfill their natures, to be

the best instances of the kinds of thing they are, they move from potential to actual as imitators of the divine actuality. Anselm expresses a more platonized, though similar, view of the value relationship of creature to Creator through the concept of truth or ‘rightness’. Translators of Anselm’s work into English sometimes render the Latin *rectitudo* as ‘rectitude’ or ‘uprightness’. I prefer ‘rightness’ because, unlike the other two possible translations, it does not carry any suggestion of specifically moral virtue. Anselm’s *rectitudo* is far more inclusive than ‘moral uprightness’ or ‘rectitude’.

*[The careful and thorough reader of the Oxford World’s Classics translation,*

*Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works* (1998), who begins his reading on Anselm's view of freedom, not with *De libertate arbitrii*, but at the proper place, the beginning of *De Veritate*, would not be misled, since the term 'rectitude' is used throughout the translation and clearly applies to forms of rightness which have nothing to do with moral virtue. The older Hopkins and Richardson translation uses the term 'rightness' for the early chapters of *De Veritate* but switches to 'uprightness' when the will is introduced; *Truth, Freedom, and Evil: Three Philosophical Dialogues* (New York: Harper, 1967). This imports a specifically moral connotation which confuses Anselm's point.]

As we shall see, this has important philosophical ramifications when it comes to a detailed analysis of his views on

how free choice works. Here suffice it to note that, for Anselm, rightness of will and moral rightness are subsets of the broader category of the rightness of all existents, a ubiquitous metaphysical goodness of which human virtue is an instance.

Anselm discusses the issue of rightness in *De Veritate*, a key text for his views on free will. It is in *De Veritate* that he defines the term ‘justice’ which will play a crucial role in the definition of free choice. He himself asked that this treatise be bound together with his two other main treatises on freedom, *De libertate arbitrii* and *De casu diaboli*, in that order. In *De Veritate* Anselm argues that in so far as a thing does its job, or

fulfills its purpose, it has a truth or rightness. And for a creature to fulfill its purpose is to conform to its exemplary idea in the mind of God, an idea which is in turn an expression of the Word or Second Person of the Trinity. God Himself is the primal Truth in which all things true or right participate. A sentence may have rightness, simply in virtue of expressing a meaning. Fire has rightness when it burns. Anything capable of desiring can have rightness of will when it wants what is good for it in conformity with God's purpose. So even a non-rational creature, like the horse that wants to go graze, can have rightness of will. What makes the rational creature exceptional is

that, not only can it have rightness of will, it can understand and choose to hold on to this rightness. The horse can will what it ought and be a good horse, but it cannot take the further step of willing *that it should be* a good horse. Anselm's analysis of created freedom is the story of how the rational creature can choose to conform to God's purposes for it, which purposes do not arise from value truths external to God nor from arbitrary divine fiat, but rather express the divine nature.

## THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

In discussing created freedom, Anselm is concerned only with morally significant freedom, our ability to choose between good

and evil. The traditional, classical theist holds that everything that has genuine ontological status is made and kept in being immediately by God. But then it would seem to follow that God is the cause of evil. If by ‘evil’ we mean pain and suffering, Anselm holds that God causes certain instances of ‘evil’. But the case is very different for wickedness. God is not only necessarily good, but is Goodness *per se*, the absolute source of and standard for goodness. And so, according to Anselm, it is literally logically impossible that God should will wickedness, or should cause one of his creatures to will it. We shall spend a great deal of time unpacking these points later, but

here at the beginning it will be helpful to offer a brief introduction to the problem of evil in the universe of traditional, classical theism.

In the current literature the problem of evil is standardly divided into two different but interrelated questions: ‘Why does God permit suffering?’; and ‘Why does God permit wickedness?’ Contemporary philosophers of religion have tended to focus on the former question, but to traditional, classical theists like Anselm it is the latter question that is the more puzzling. Anselm has very little to say on the question of suffering, while he devotes a treatise, *De casu diaboli*, to the questions of how and why

an originally good, rational creature could choose injustice and what role God plays in that choice. In fact, for Anselm, as for other medieval philosophers, while it is entirely reasonable to wonder why God allows pain and suffering, it is none the less odd to speak of suffering as if it were evil in anything like the same way that wickedness is evil.

The little Anselm has to say on the question of suffering makes it clear that he is following the lines set out by Augustine and Boethius. If the issue is the suffering of human beings, that can be traced to human wickedness and the importance of human freedom. Augustine defends the view that God made

human beings sufficiently wise and good that they could avoid suffering in their original state. It was the sin of Adam and Eve which introduced misery and death to the human condition. Even without the theologically informed history, a plausible case can be made that much human suffering is immediately caused by human wickedness, and much more could have been averted had it not been for human wickedness.

The central question of Boethius's *Philosophiae consolationis* is why God permits ‘bad fortune’, or rather, why God permits the virtuous to suffer. He concludes that there is ultimately no such thing as ‘bad fortune’. Suffering is not a genuine evil. It is

not something that in some absolute sense, and given the situation in the actual world, ought not to happen. When the wicked suffer, that is simple justice.

*[Boethius and his medieval confreres do not share the utilitarian sentiment that it is preferable that even the wicked be happy, and in this I take it they agree with most contemporary Westerners. How many of us really hope for a pleasant and comfortable future for the convicted murderer?]*

When the good suffer, it is an opportunity to learn and to develop in virtue. Because we are free to respond to suffering in a way that will bring us good, no fortune is bad *simpliciter*.

This argument may sound almost inhumanly callous, and on

its own could hardly succeed in solving the problem of suffering. But it should be remembered that Boethius is writing from prison. He has lost everything and is awaiting what he knows will be a brutal execution. He has earned the right to be taken seriously in his opinion that suffering can serve a beneficial purpose. But although this Boethian position is helpful in addressing the problem of suffering, it is not fully satisfactory. First, it does not address the suffering of those who, because of age or incompetence, are incapable of turning the suffering to good purpose. And second, if Boethius means to justify every instance of suffering as ultimately productive

of some greater good, it follows that in attempting to relieve suffering we prevent some greater good, and so it would seem we ought to allow the suffering, or possibly even promote it. That cannot be right.

Anselm does very briefly address the issue of human suffering in his treatise, *De concordia praescientiae et praedestinationis et gratiae dei cum libero arbitrio*, (hereafter *De concordia*). The question he is actually concerned with is: how does God know sin and the punishment for sin? This is a difficult problem for the traditional, classical theist, given his position that God's knowledge is causal. Anselm holds that God

neither causes nor knows sin because sin is not any sort of ‘thing’ to be known. He follows the Augustinian view which will be elaborated below and throughout this work, that the evil of wickedness consists in an absence, or lack, or perversion, or falling short, of the good, and hence in itself has no ontological status.

But the punishment for sin is a different matter. The evil of harm (*incommodum*), which is the opposite of benefit (*commodum*), can sometimes be nothing and sometimes something. Anselm’s concept of ‘benefit’ is key to his analyses of freedom and justice and will be discussed extensively in later chapters. Here it is enough to note that a benefit is something

which is desirable because it is the sort of thing which can produce happiness. Needless to say, ‘happiness’, too, calls for significant elaboration, which we can save until later. ‘Harm’, then, is what is likely to cause unhappiness. Blindness is indeed a harm, but it is not a thing. In knowing blindness, God simply knows and causes the creature which lacks an ability it ought to have had. But some harm, like sadness, Anselm sees as positively existent. As such it is, in itself, both known and caused by God. But Anselm dismisses the problem in a quick sentence in which he follows Boethius. Such harm punishes the wicked and ‘trains and purifies’ the just, and

so, though harmful in one way, it does not conflict with the goodness of God to say that His knowledge sustains it in being.

Anselm does not directly address the question of the suffering of human beings who, because of age or incompetence, do not have the resources to follow Boethius's advice of turning apparently bad fortune to some good purpose. Nor does he address the difficulty that the Boethian position seems to entail that human agents ought to permit or possibly even promote suffering. But Anselm, unlike his predecessors, has the resources to respond to these difficult questions, in that, as a libertarian, he can mount a full-fledged free

will defense. Like Augustine, he traces human suffering to human freedom. But, as we shall see, Augustine's compatibilism entails that God could have prevented human suffering by determining human agents freely to avoid the choices that would result in such suffering. The suffering is ultimately determined by God and presumably part of His plan, and we are back with the Boethian problems.

Anselm, on the other hand, can find further justifications beyond those suggested by Boethius for God's causing, in the sense of sustaining in being, the sort of harm which has positive existence. On Anselm's account, God does not control the free choices of

rational creatures. The sort of freedom which can produce merit is morally significant freedom. Unjust choices sometimes cause harm. Were God to prevent the harm of the choice to occur, by failing to sustain its existence, the choice for injustice would not be a live option. If you know that you cannot do A, you will not include the doing of A among the options you consider.

*[One might argue that God could prevent the harm but deceive rational agents so that they would believe that the harm occurs. Anselm is adamant that God does not deceive, and so he must reject this line of argument.]*

But injustice must be a live option for the human agent to have morally significant freedom.

So God may sustain in being the harms resulting from free choice, not because the specific harms are necessarily productive of future goods, but because they are the ineliminable result of the overriding good of human freedom. Such harms are ‘pointless’ in the sense that they are not necessarily productive of future goods. This does not rule out the Boethian claim that human freedom may sometimes bring good out of harm. Perhaps the occurrence of the harm inspires some agent to work to prevent future harms. A modified Boethian approach which allows that freedom can turn many harms to good purpose does not entail the unacceptable consequence

that each harm necessarily produces some greater, future good. Anselm's free will defense, as it relates to God's being the sustainer of existent harms, can only be effective if it can be shown that libertarian freedom is both possible and terrifically valuable in a theist universe, and these are the topics of the present work.

Another category of suffering should be mentioned, since it has played a major role in the contemporary discussion of the problem of evil, and that is the suffering of animals. Animal pain often occurs without any connection to human beings and so the justifications which appeal to human freedom and soul-building are completely

ineffective here. Anselm himself does not deal with the issue, but it is probably safe to hold that he is satisfied with the position of Augustine, which is the standard view throughout the Middle Ages. Animals are intrinsically good. Even absent any use or value they may have for human beings they are good things in themselves. It is far better that they should exist than not.

But they are by nature corruptible. And when a sentient thing is injured or falls apart it is its nature to hurt. This is an inevitable element of the causal processes which enable animals to survive and reproduce. Moreover, some animals are by nature predator and some by nature prey. But being

predator or prey is to cause or suffer pain. What ‘by nature’ means here is that if the property which involves suffering were removed from the creature, the creature could not exist. Aquinas chides those who suppose that in Paradise the lion and the falcon were herbivores. Something which is a herbivore cannot have the nature of a lion or a falcon. And it is unreasonable to hold that in order to spare the mouse suffering, falcons simply should not exist. It is especially unreasonable if we take it that the existence of the falcon is a necessary condition of the evolution of the mouse. In wishing away the predator, we also do away with the prey. One can

always insist that there is some possible world without lions and falcons and mice which has no suffering or at least has less than our real world and is as good as or better than ours. Contemporary literature on the problem of evil is full of attempts to produce such worlds, but it is debatable whether any succeeds in producing even a remotely plausible candidate. We shall revisit this issue in Chapter 10 in discussing the question of whether or not it is absurd to propose that our actual world is the best God could make.

Suffering, then, can be caused by God either as a necessary consequence of the natures of creatures or, in the special case of rational creatures, as a punishment

or test or as the otherwise pointless result of free choice. Wickedness, however, cannot be caused by God. Anselm's understanding of evil, and from now on the term will denote *moral* evil, injustice, wickedness, sin, is rooted in the position which Augustine advanced against the Manicheans. The Manicheans had argued that the source of evil is a force, equal and opposite to the good God, associated with darkness and matter. Human beings do evil because their good souls are trapped in evil bodies. Augustine insisted that it is incoherent to propose an opposite to God. Matter, human bodies, and in fact everything that exists, is good. Wickedness is entirely

parasitic on good. Remove every good quality and there is literally and absolutely nothing left to a thing. Evil involves choosing some good which, for one reason or another, should not then be the object of choice. So, for example, gold is intrinsically a good thing, both attractive and useful, but if your desire for gold led you to choose it over honesty, you would sin.

But how and why would a rational creature, made in imitation of God, choose the wrong good? Here Anselm parts company with Augustine. Augustine holds that, even before the Fall, the rational creature, because it is made from nothing, will inevitably be infected by pride

and will be drawn away from God back towards the nothingness. God can give the creature the grace required to remain steadfast in the good. When He does not do so, the creature's fall is inevitable. Thus, although Augustine insists, against the Manicheans, that evil is just nothing, he invests the 'nothing' with a sort of explanatory power, the power of a vacuum. And it is difficult to see how the responsibility for sin should not be attributed to God, since it is His choice to abandon His creature to the inherent defects in its nature with which it was created.

On Anselm's account evil has no power at all. It is the created agent who introduces the

nothingness of injustice to the world by its free choice. But if all that is, is good, and is sustained in being from moment to moment by God, and if there is no such thing as existent evil to motivate the agent, how could the rational creature possibly choose injustice? And how could human freedom be worth the terrible price in suffering that it exacts? Anselm solves the problem of evil through a careful analysis demonstrating both the possibility and the tremendous value of libertarian, morally significant, created freedom.

## 2: The Augustinian Legacy

The work of Saint Augustine is the foundation of Christian philosophy in the early Middle Ages, and Anselm is one of its most devoted disciples. His basic metaphysics and epistemology are solidly Augustinian. And yet Anselm did not agree with everything the Master had said. He does not say it explicitly, but it is clear that his work on free will is motivated by a fundamental problem which he finds in the work of Augustine. It is in his book *De casu diaboli* that he comes to grips with the basic mechanics of created freedom, and the question which drives the

work is this: how could Satan, created perfectly good, choose to sin? Anselm's student interlocutor spells out the 'standard' answer he has heard. Satan sinned because he chose not to persevere in the good will which God had given to him at creation, and the reason he did not persevere was that God had not given him the necessary perseverance. Though Anselm does not cite the source, this is Augustine's position. But in Anselm's view this answer is, at best, radically incomplete. How, if Satan could not help but fall without the God-given perseverance, can we avoid the conclusion that God is responsible for the sin?

*De casu diaboli* aims to answer

this question by carving out a space for self-causal free agency on the part of the creature. In the universe of traditional, classical theism such a space will necessarily be small if it can be discovered at all. But unless the creature can be an originating causal agent, the tension between divine sovereignty and created freedom is resolved all on the side of the divine. Whatever agency the rational creature can be said to possess will be a sort of ‘secondary’ agency, just as natural created causes are ‘secondary’ causes: the fire burns the cotton, and it does so through its own causal power, but the fire and its powers and all of its activities are caused immediately by the will of

God. If created free agency is ‘secondary’ then, although it will be correct to say that the agent chooses by the power of his own will, the agent, the will, and everything about the choice are immediately caused by God. And in that case, God is ‘the author of sin’. Though Augustine adamantly and consistently denies that his position entails this conclusion, there do not seem to be resources in his work to escape it.

It may be that Anselm saw himself as simply working through some of Augustine’s unfinished business. If that was his understanding then I take it that his assessment of his project is too humble. I shall argue that, in trying to solve the problems he had

inherited while remaining within the basic outlines of Augustinian Christianity, Anselm develops a view very different from Augustine's on free will and on the relationship of creature to Creator. Augustine's views on free will are far-reaching and complex, they developed in the long course of his career, and they have been the subject of many scholarly volumes. Here I can offer only a quick sketch of Augustine's position. I hope to say enough to set the stage historically, and also to bring out the philosophical and theological issues that Anselm confronts and the commitments that he believes he cannot reject. Much of my discussion of Augustine will focus on the

narrow question of the explanation for the first sins of Satan and Adam, especially the discussion in *De civitate Dei* of why the bad angels fell, since it is this which motivates much of Anselm's work on freedom. But a brief overview will help to locate this particular issue within Augustine's overall position.

## AUGUSTINE'S COMPATIBILISM

It is standard in Augustine scholarship to focus on Augustine's views on grace and predestination as especially problematic and to point out that these views have troubled readers of Augustine's work from his day to ours. In his mid and later work,

starting with his *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum*, he seems to invest all the causal power for the salvation of fallen man in God's hands, leaving no room for human agency. In his *Retractationes* he discusses how in that work from the 390s he had tried to solve the question of the pre-natal election of Jacob over Esau, ‘. . . in favor of the free choice of the human will, but God’s grace triumphed. And it was only by reaching this point, that I could understand that the apostle had spoken with the clearest truth: What sets you apart? What do you have that you have not received? And if you received it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?’

Post-lapsarian humanity is universally turned towards evil and damned without God's grace. God gives grace to some and not to others, but not on the basis of any difference between the recipients. Grace is irresistible in the sense that it is given in such a way that the will of the recipient inevitably embraces it. Thus the story of the redemption of the individual human being seems to contain only one causally efficacious agent, and that is God. Augustine does not say that the human will loses its freedom in the face of grace. In his view the will chooses freely when it can choose what it wants, and it is most free when it wants what it ought to want. Over the course of his many

discussions of the workings of grace he moved from the view that God's efficacious grace works externally through presenting the will with the proper objects of desire in such a way that it must want them to the position that grace works internally through conditioning the will itself to want what it ought. Either way, on Augustine's understanding of freedom, there is no conflict between human freedom and efficacious grace. Nor is there any injustice in God's effecting the salvation of some and not others, since all are justly damned. God does nothing unjustly, and His merciful election of some derives from his mysterious justice which is beyond the power of human

reason to fathom.

Clearly Augustine's position on grace and free will after the Fall, which seems to place all the efficacious agency in the hands of God, is troubling for one who believes that the morally significant choices an individual makes should play some decisive role in whether they are praised or blamed, happy or unhappy. The real problem, however, runs deeper in Augustine's thought than the theological question of redemptive grace for post-lapsarian humanity. As Anselm recognized, Augustine's analysis of the choices of the unfallen will, the will in its ideal condition, raises exactly the same problem as his view of saving

grace. According to Augustine, the created will chooses on the basis of what it most desires. There is nothing in Augustine's work to suggest that on this most fundamental point about the working of the will he distinguished between the pre-lapsarian and the post-lapsarian condition. But everything about the creature, including its knowledge, will, and desires, and everything about its situation, including whatever can be a possible object of desire, are from God. Thus, as I shall argue, on Augustine's understanding, God is not only the architect of the original situation in which the created agent finds himself, He also controls the outcome. But

then God is responsible for created choices, even in the beginning when the will is in its original, pristine condition. The upshot seems to be, as Anselm acknowledges in *De casu diaboli*, that the very first choice for evil can be traced to God.

Anselm does not express the problem in these modern terms, but, as I shall argue, the underlying difficulty is that Augustine is a compatibilist, as that view is defined in the Introduction to this work. He is both a standard compatibilist and a theist compatibilist, the two ‘compatibilisms’ being intertwined in his work. Augustine believes that choices are causally explained by factors outside of the agent,

such that the actual choice is inevitable under the circumstances. Still he holds that the will is free and the choice is voluntary so long as it is able to effect what it wants. The sort of necessity which would negate freedom must be some sort of compulsion. And moral responsibility accrues to the will so long as it is free. Augustine attributes to the human agent what I call ‘secondary agency’. True, the created will has causal efficacy, but it is a *per aliud* agency on the analogy of secondary causation in general. A secondary cause is what it is and does what it does because it is immediately willed to be and do by God. True, the fire burns the cotton, but on a

different, and more fundamental, ontological level God causes the fire burning the cotton. Analogously to a secondary natural cause, a secondary agent is an agent which wills with causal efficacy, but in total dependence on God such that absolutely nothing—no property of the choice *at all*—ultimately originates with the agent. God is the primary causal agent producing the choice. This would seem to be the obvious entailment of traditional, classical theism, and we shall see that Augustine, though he does not use the terms ‘secondary causality’ or ‘secondary agency’ makes exactly the proposed analogy between human choice and natural phenomena

when he is explaining how a choice can be caused by a created agent, and also by God.

[Aquinas, too, seems to see free choice as secondary agency when he argues that, just as there are genuine natural causes, although God is their first cause, so there are voluntary choices, although God is their first cause (*ST* 1, Q. 83, art. 1, ad. 3; see also *SCG* 1:68). Recently Hugh McCann has proposed a view something like this, insisting that God is not blameworthy for the evil choices He causes in his created agents; ‘Divine Sovereignty and the Freedom of the Will’, *Faith and Philosophy* 12 (1995), 582–9 and ‘Sovereignty and Freedom: A Reply to Rowe’, *Faith and Philosophy* 18 (2001), 110–16. I offer a criticism in ‘Does God Cause Sin? Anselm of Canterbury versus Jonathan Edwards on Human Freedom and Divine Sovereignty’, *Faith and Philosophy* 20 (2003), 371 – 8.]

Anselm, however, manages to find a small space for human input, whereas Augustine's compatibilism leaves all the primary agency in the hands of God.

It is important here to separate the theological question of the interaction of redemptive grace and human freedom from the more strictly philosophical question of the basic nature and working of the created free will. On the former, theological, question Augustine's ultimate views are the result of a long process of change and development. This has led many scholars to hold that Augustine's later views on free will are very different from those he held

earlier, especially in his influential *De libero arbitrio*. However, it is not at all clear that he changed his mind in any fundamental way on his basic philosophical analysis of free will.

Throughout his career Augustine consistently speaks of the soul being drawn by love. ‘My love is my weight; by it I am borne wherever I am borne.’ ‘A material body is borne along in a particular direction by its weight, just as a soul is by its love.’\* ‘It is necessary that we do whatever attracts us more.’ James Wetzel writes that ‘. . . one of the most important principles of Augustine’s philosophy of mind [is that] we always act in response to what attracts us (even if we should have

to act in response to what repels us least). One tempting understanding of free will, that we are self-movers, is consequently ruled out of court. We have no motives for acting independently of what we perceive to be the good in acting.' Given that we are not the originators of our desires, this suggests standard compatibilism as I have defined it. Our choices follow inevitably from desires which arise from sources outside of us, and hence are determined. I shall look first at how this view is clearly expressed in the later anti-Pelagian works, where most scholars do not doubt its presence, and then argue that there is no reason to believe that these later works portray a

genuinely different analysis of free will from the earlier works. Further, Augustine is consistently compatibilist when he is dealing with the pre-lapsarian will as well as the post-lapsarian will. And here is where the troubling aspects of Augustine's compatibilism become most clear, as Anselm grasps centuries later.

*De gratia et libero arbitrio*, written in 426, provides an excellent proof text among the later works for Augustine's compatibilism. The work begins by proving from Scripture that human beings do indeed have free choice, and so we deserve praise for our good behavior ('good merits') and blame for our wickedness. But it is the presence

or absence of grace which produces in us the praiseworthy or blameworthy choices. ‘But clearly, once grace has been given, our good merits also begin to exist, but through that grace. For, if grace is withdrawn, a human being falls, no longer standing upright, but cast headlong by free choice. Hence, even when a human being begins to have good merits, he ought not to attribute them to himself, but to God. . .’. We merit heaven by living a good life, but the good life is itself a gift of grace. Therefore, ‘. . . eternal life. . . is grace in return for grace’. And yet it is by our own wills that we choose. ‘It is certain that we will when we will, but [God] causes us to will what is good. . .’. I think

that I have argued enough against those who violently attack the grace of God which does not destroy the human will, but changes it from an evil will to a good will, and, once it is good, helps it.'

Our wills are determined by God's grace to love and choose the good, and yet they are genuinely free, and the created agent who chooses well is justly praised and rewarded. In *De gratia et libero arbitrio* Augustine even suggests that the divine will is in control of the wills of those who do evil. He provides a list of scriptural instances in which God has caused evil wills and consequent deeds in order to achieve his good purposes;

hardening Pharaoh's heart, causing the evil son of Gera to curse David, causing Judas to betray Christ. 'Who would not tremble before these judgments of God by which God does what he wills even in the hearts of evil persons, repaying them, nonetheless, according to their merits? . . . For the almighty produces in the hearts of human beings even the movement of their will in order to do through them what he himself wills to do through them, he who absolutely cannot will anything unjust.'

In the example about the son of Gera, God 'tells' him to curse David. Augustine says that this telling could not have been in the form of a commandment, else the

cursing would have been obedient and praiseworthy. Rather, ‘by his just and hidden judgment God inclined toward this sin that man’s will which was evil because of its own sinfulness’. This seems to suggest the Calvinist doctrine of an explicit will of God in His commandments, and a hidden will by which God actually produces all events including sinful choices.

*[A similar position is expressed in the Enchiridion (26.100) written a few years earlier (421/422). I label this doctrine ‘Calvinist’ because Calvin was willing to spell it out explicitly; Institutes Book I, ch. 17, pts. 1 – 5. I take it that anyone who holds that God is the cause of all, including all creaturely choices, must say that God willingly causes choices which He has commanded the agents not to make.]*

In the book he was writing at his death, *Opus imperfectum contra Julianum*, Augustine clearly expresses the interaction of divine will and human agency, at least *good* human agency, through an analogy with primary and secondary causality, implying that created free willing is what I have called ‘secondary’ agency. ‘And if God produces a good will in a human being, He does it so that the good will comes from the one whose will it is, just as He works so that a human being comes to be through another human being. Just because it is God who creates a human being that does not mean that the human being is not born from another human being.’ The

new human being can be said to be caused by his parents, but he, with all his properties, is more fundamentally caused immediately and completely by God. On this analogy, the human choice is caused by the human will as a secondary cause, with God being the primary cause of every aspect of the choice. This is theist compatibilism.

Not only does Augustine clearly express a compatibilist doctrine of will in these later works, but he considers libertarianism, and raises against it the standard ‘intelligibility’ problem. As the Stoics had already remarked, libertarianism denies a necessitating cause for choice, and ‘... if events are not necessitated,

they must be uncaused, inexplicable and hence mysterious'.

[Richard Sorabji, *Necessity, Cause and Blame* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 26–7. Libertarianism, with its concern for alternative possibilities, is apparently rather a late-comer to the free will debate among philosophers. Susanne Bobzien finds it first in the work of Alexander of Aphrodisias in the second to third centuries AD; *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 401. Richard Sorabji (*Necessity*, 227–33) notes that some scholars have argued that Aristotle suggests uncaused choice, but he disputes this reading.]

But then an agent cannot really be held morally responsible for the uncaused event that occurs within

him. In his *Opus imperfectum contra Julianum*, Augustine and his interlocutor, the Pelagian Julian of Eclanum, agree that willing is the ‘movement of the soul, with no compulsion’. But Julian goes on to hold that freedom, even as it exists in man after the Fall, is the ability to choose well or badly, with no pre-existent causal factors determining the choice. If the movement of soul arises from some preceding source it ceases to be free. Augustine has theological reasons to reject this view. As it stands, it seems to imply that we can merit salvation on our own, and if that is the case then Christ’s sacrifice is unnecessary. But he also makes the philosophical case,

often repeated by present-day critics of libertarianism, that Julian's position entails that a choice is a sort of random accident that happens to the agent. Augustine writes, ‘. . . you say, certainly it begins to be, but it does not have any source. Or, what is even crazier, it was not, it is, and nevertheless it never began.’ Moreover, if the choice to sin is uncaused it seems as if sin is something that just happens to the agent without him genuinely *willing* it. But then how can the evil be connected to the agent such that the agent is really to blame?

These later works express a compatibilist doctrine of free will. Does this constitute a radically

different position from that held by the early Augustine? Augustine himself, in his *Retractationes*, written in 426/427, points to a change in his views on free will. As mentioned above, he discusses how in *Ad Simplicianum*, written in the mid-390s, he had tried to solve the question of Jacob's pre-natal election over Esau, '... in favor of the free choice of the human will, but God's grace triumphed. And it was only by reaching this point, that I could understand that the apostle had spoken with the clearest truth: What sets you apart? What do you have that you have not received? And if you received it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?' Some scholars argue that this

work from the 390s signals a change in Augustine's philosophical analysis of the way the will works. James Wetzel writes, 'Augustine abandons this fiction [of libertarian free choice] when he comes to the conclusion, early in his long career as a theologian, that God can call sinners irresistibly to a new way of life.'

[Wetzel, Augustine, 8. Wetzel holds that for Augustine, 'There is no faculty of will, distinct from desire, which we use to determine our actions.' This seems to imply that the person cannot stand back from conflicting desires, deliberate between them, and commit to one or another. Introspection, on the contrary, seems to show that there is more to choice than simply following desire. And Augustine in *Confessions* 8.5 describes

*his state of mind as one of being torn between two desires, but somehow ‘siding’ with one over the other. Still, Augustine does often seem to run together voluntas as will and voluntas as motive or desire. I shall continue to speak as if Augustine assumes a faculty of will, separate from intellect and not literally identical with desire. However, if Wetzel is correct, then my argument is made even more forcefully. Our choices are determined by God since it is he who supplies us with our desires. For purposes of my argument, Wetzel’s interpretation simply dismisses the will as a ‘middleman’, which chooses in accord with the desires.]*

Certainly *Ad Simplicianum* represents a significant change in how Augustine assesses the responsibility of the human will in relation to God’s saving action. It is here that he comes to believe that election is unconditional, not

based on any humanly initiated petition for divine aid, and that the call to election is always effectual. But different as this may be from the views he expressed in his earlier work, the change does not necessarily signal a move from a libertarian to a compatibilist metaphysics of free will. Unless a libertarian position is expressed in the earlier writings, the change in Augustine's views need not reach down to the fundamental level of the basic workings of the will. The argument in *Ad Simplicianum* certainly constitutes an important realigning in Augustine's thought of the respective roles of divine and human willing, but on my interpretation, it is one made possible by the underlying

compatibilist metaphysics of freedom Augustine had always assumed: we are drawn to choose what we judge most desirable. *Ad Simplicianum* would then mark the point at which Augustine realized that his doctrine of the will allowed him to insist upon the unqualified primacy of divine sovereignty without simply denying human freedom and responsibility.

Augustine's own analysis of his development on the question of free will supports this reading. In the *Retractationes* he insists that the Pelagians misread his early work *De libero arbitrio*, when they cited it in support of their own emphasis on human freedom. *De libero arbitrio* was

written against the Manicheans, who proposed two separate wills in the human agent, such that one does evil by a will which is somehow not really one's own. In response, Augustine had emphasized that the human agent chooses good or bad through his own, individual, and single will, and so is morally responsible. But in looking back from his later perspective, Augustine insists that the earlier work does not advance a view of the relationship of the divine to the created will which is fundamentally different from the one he later enunciated against the Pelagians. He explains that even in *De libero arbitrio* he had maintained the position that all goods, including good choices,

come from God. ‘Since all goods, as we said, whether great or moderate or small, are from God, it follows that the good use of free will, which is virtue, is also from God, and is numbered among the great goods.’

Augustine’s interpretation of his early work might have to be seen as a misrepresentation were there clear evidence of libertarianism in *De libero arbitrio*.

Certainly in that dialogue Augustine insists that our choices must be voluntary, for otherwise we could not be praised or blamed. And the voluntary movement of the will is clearly distinguished from motion which occurs by natural necessity like the falling of a stone. The will is

likened to a hinge, in that it can turn towards the good or towards the bad. Nothing is so much in our own possession as our wills, and we have only to will the good will in order to possess it. But compatibilists say all these things. There is no evidence here of libertarianism. On the contrary, the assumption seems to be that we choose what we are drawn to choose by our desires. In Book 1 Augustine argues that *libido*, desire for lower things, is the driving factor in all wrongdoing, and that the good man is defined by his love of what is eternal and immutable.

[*Ibid.*, 1.3.21, 1.15.31. The analysis of wrongdoing in this early work owes much to the influence of platonism. See William

*Babcock, ‘Augustine on Sin and Moral Agency’, *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 16 (1988), 40–56, see p. 34. To my knowledge it is not standard to argue that Plato, or his ancient and classical followers, accepted a libertarian view of freedom. The Platonic image of wrongdoing seems to be consistently that the soul is dragged downwards by its desires for lower things.]*

(There will be a great deal more to say about the cause of evil in the discussion below regarding the first sins.)

In Book 3 Augustine offers a list of types of ‘choice’ which are unfree and hence not really voluntary and open to praise or blame. They include choices made through, ‘some violence which compels against one’s will’, ‘some irresistible cause’, or ‘some

deception'. These are exactly the sorts of examples compatibilists always give of what is *not* free choice, when they are explaining how, although your choice is determined, if you are able to pursue what you judge most desirable you have enough freedom to ground moral responsibility. Augustine's list of unfree 'choice' does not include being inevitably drawn to choose the one option you find most desirable.

Perhaps the most telling evidence against the libertarian interpretation of *De libero arbitrio* is the absence, in that work, of what is today called the 'free will defense'.

*[There are, of course, different versions*

*of the free will defense, and if all one meant by the term was an argument attempting to absolve God of responsibility for sin by laying the blame with created free will, then perhaps Augustine does offer one. I use the term to refer to a standard, incompatibilist, version of the argument which purports to show that it is best that God permit moral evil because He could not prevent it without destroying created freedom.]*

Augustine's dialogue is in part a theodicy. It asks: how is it that a perfectly good and omnipotent God permits evil? If Augustine had been a libertarian at the time he wrote the work, one would expect that he would avail himself of the free will defense, since it is a viable libertarian answer to the theist problem of moral evil.

*[I am not aware of any developed*

*theodicy among the libertarian Pelagians. To my knowledge Anselm is the first philosopher to develop a systematic theodicy along libertarian lines. In his *De casu diaboli*, as I argue in Chapter 5, he holds that morally significant freedom for a created agent entails the literally open option to choose between good and evil.]*

The original premises of the free will defense are these: God has made creatures with free will, and free will is a very good thing because without it the creature could not choose rightly and be virtuous. In *De libero arbitrio* Augustine wholeheartedly defends both of these claims. But the free will defense goes on to argue the libertarian point that a genuine ability to choose the good in the way required for a created agent to act from itself (*a se*) and have

morally significant freedom, necessarily entails the genuine, alternative possibility of *not* choosing the good, but instead choosing evil. Thus it is not possible for God to leave us free and yet prevent us from choosing evil. Some scholars have attributed this position to Augustine. Gilson, for example, in discussing *De libero arbitrio* writes that for Augustine, ‘the possibility of the evil use of free will was the necessary condition for the goodness and happiness brought about by its good use’.

[*Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, 147. In spite of this, Gilson consistently argues that Augustine always held the view which I have labeled standard compatibilism; we

*inevitably choose what we judge to be most desirable, see pp. 132–6, 143–64.]*

But the text which he cites does not say exactly this. It says that the will is an intermediate good which can turn towards good or evil, and that we must have a will if we are to love truth and wisdom and achieve happiness. But this does not entail that free choice must include aseity and open options, such that God could not bring about our always choosing good without impairing our free will.

In *De libero arbitrio* Augustine does indeed ask why God did not make His rational creatures so that they would always choose the good, but he never suggests anything like the free will defense in response. Rather, he says that

God has made one class of such creatures, the good angels. God has also made creatures who would sin and be redeemed, and creatures who would remain in sin. But even the last category of creature is a good sort of thing, and it is better that it should exist, even in unhappiness, than that it should not exist at all. And all of these strata of created agents serve the order and beauty of the whole creation. Augustine here does not say that God simply causes the good angels to remain good. And he is careful to say that God does not somehow need sin in order to round out the universe. None the less, his answer does not suggest the free will defense or indeed any libertarian assumptions.

This sketchy response in *De libero arbitrio* to the question of why God did not bring it about that rational creatures would always choose the good seems to be an early version of a more developed answer Augustine gives to the same question in *De Genesi ad litteram*, a work he wrote after *Ad Simplicianum* over a long period between 401 and 415. Here he writes, ‘They [some unspecified perplexed] say that God should have made men so that they would have absolutely no wish to sin. Now, we concede that a nature is better which takes absolutely no delight in forbidden things’ (11.7.9). This seems expressly to deny the libertarian claim that it was best that God make men with

the sort of morally significant freedom that entails the option to choose between right and wrong. He goes on to say that God could turn (*convertere*) the bad wills of evil men into good wills. Note that for Augustine these ‘turned’ wills would not be destroyed or rendered unfree, as the free will defense would have it, rather they would just be turned from bad to good, with no harm done. Why then did God not do so? Because He did not choose to. And why did He not choose to? God only knows (*Cur noluerit, penes ipsum est*). We can say at least this, that had He made all men good, at least one class of good creatures would not have existed, that is, those who are converted by the thought

of the miserable condition of evil doers. ‘Thus by increasing the number of the best kind of thing, the number of good kinds would be diminished’ (11.10.13). This argument from *De Genesi ad litteram* is not just different from the free will defense, it conflicts with it. Thus, in looking at *De libero arbitrio*, it is plausible to interpret the presence of a sketchy version of this argument, where one would have expected a libertarian to offer the free will defense, as evidence that Augustine was not assuming a libertarian understanding of freedom in the earlier work.

It should be noted that Eleonore Stump argues that Augustine is a libertarian in this early work. She

grants that Augustine believes that everything – including human choice – is caused by God, and so she seems to accept that he is, to use my terminology, a theist compatibilist, but she chooses to bracket this point. If we set aside the question of God's immediate causal input, then, she holds, we can read Augustine as a libertarian. She points to two key libertarian commitments. First, ‘an agent acts with free will, or is morally responsible for an act, only if the act is not causally determined by anything outside the agent’. Secondly, ‘an agent acts with free will, or is morally responsible for an act, only if her own intellect and will are the sole ultimate source or first cause of her act’. Stump holds

that these two principles are sufficient for a qualified libertarianism, and the claim that an agent must really have been able to do otherwise is not necessary. Stump suggests a hierarchical account of the will and freedom which is supposed to capture what is essential to libertarianism and to demonstrate that open options are not crucial. It is well to spend some time on Stump's suggestion, since I shall be arguing that Anselm does indeed propose a hierarchical account of created free will, but that he nevertheless insists that the created agent must have been able to do otherwise.

The hierarchical account supposes that we can have desires

about what desires we have. For example, Stump invites us to imagine a smoker who longs to smoke, but who also dearly wishes he did not have the desire to smoke. Suppose he then decides to use a device which will effectively kill that longing and make him want not to smoke. Now he cannot smoke since he wills not to. He does not have options with regard to smoking or not smoking. And yet, shouldn't we say that his not smoking is done freely? As Stump analyzes the example, our non-smoker is free in a libertarian sense because his not smoking is not determined by anything outside himself, and his own intellect and will are the sole ultimate source of his act.

Stump notes, as I did above, that Augustine insists in his *Retractationes* that he had not changed his mind radically on the nature of the will since *De libero arbitrio*. And in the *Retractationes* he says that he had always held that the fallen agent sins inevitably without grace, and yet that the sinning agent is morally culpable. It follows then that his account of free will in *De libero arbitrio* does not insist upon open options for moral responsibility. On the other hand, Stump continues, in *De libero arbitrio* Augustine clearly says things to suggest that an agent cannot be free if his choices are causally determined by something outside himself and if his own will and intellect are not the ultimate

source for his choice. But this sounds libertarian. She suggests that the way to avoid the appearance of contradiction is to attribute to Augustine the hierarchical account of free will sketched above. At one level we may choose inevitably, but that is because at a higher level of desire we choose to have the desire that leads us to choose. Our choice is inevitable, but it is not determined by anything outside ourselves, and our own will and intellect are its ultimate source. Augustine, then, can be seen as a qualified libertarian in *De libero arbitrio*.

Stump's conclusion is a bit too hasty here, it seems to me. There is a crucial question to be asked regarding the smoker example.

Did the smoker choose freely to use the device that would cause him to will not to smoke? If not, then he is not free when he inevitably wills not to smoke. Though Stump does not address this question in discussing *De libero arbitrio*, she does raise it in discussing the later Augustine's views on grace. She writes:

We would evaluate the case very differently if the story were that a paternalistic neurosurgeon took it on himself, without consultation with Smith, to cause Smith to have the second-order desire to quit smoking, so that the neurosurgeon and not Smith is responsible for Smith's decision to employ the device. In that case, control over Smith's will with regard to smoking would be vested in the

neurosurgeon and not in Smith, and Smith's volitions to smoke or not to smoke wouldn't meet the conditions for being free and responsible on either modified or common libertarianism.

Suppose that in *De libero arbitrio* Augustine does adopt this hierarchical account of free will. The human agent chooses inevitably, but this is because, at a higher level of desire, the agent truly desires to have the desire that leads to the inevitable choice. The pressing question, then, is what is the source of this higher-order desire? Augustine holds, and Stump does not dispute this, that choice must always be motivated by some desire. This means that Augustine cannot locate the

ultimate source of human desire in some originating human choice, since choice always follows desire. The agent, then, is not the ultimate source of his desire. In a non-theist universe the ultimate source of desire would be natural causes. In Augustine's universe it is God who is the ultimate source of everything including desires. And so, as in the situation with the paternalistic neurosurgeon, the higher-order desires which control the lower-order desires which lead inevitably to a given choice arise from something outside of the agent. The agent's choice is determined. Stump's attribution of a hierarchical account of free will to Augustine does not succeed in showing him to be any sort of a

libertarian in *De libero arbitrio*. Since choice is caused inevitably by desire, and the agent is not the source of his desires, even with the hierarchical account, this is standard compatibilism. Augustine's underlying metaphysics of free will did not change radically between the earlier work and the time he wrote *Ad Simplicianum*. Though he did adjust his emphases on the roles of grace and free will, he was always a compatibilist when it comes to how the will actually works.

Focusing on the philosophical question of Augustine's compatibilism is helpful in assessing the historical development of his thought since

it provides reason to be careful not to overemphasize the difference between the early and the later Augustine. But if the later Augustine leaves no room for genuine human agency in the story of human destiny, and if this is difficult to square with the absolute goodness and justice of God, then the conclusion thus far seems to be an unhappy one. Augustine always held that the rational agent chooses on the basis of what it judges most desirable, and God is the cause of the intellect and the desiring nature which determine the choices. How can Augustine avoid the conclusion that God is the author of sin?

*[Certainly not everyone finds this an*

*unhappy conclusion. Lynne Rudder Baker embraces the conclusion of Augustine's compatibilism, that all events including every human choice for good or ill are caused by God. Baker, however, suggests an 'improved' Augustinianism by adding universal salvation, avoiding the problem of God's eternally punishing the sinful, when it is He who caused them to sin; 'Why Christians should not be libertarians: An Augustinian Challenge', *Faith and Philosophy* 20 (2003), 460-78.]*

Here is a possible answer: after the Fall the human being is inevitably drawn to sin by desire for lesser goods, unless God steps in with the grace which will draw the will irresistibly to the good, and, if God gives persevering grace, to salvation. This is indeed a compatibilist story. But it describes the present,

post-lapsarian condition. And mankind is in this fallen state because of the free choice of the first human beings. So Adam and Eve, and before them Satan, are the originators of evil. This position makes it difficult to see why subsequent generations of fallen human beings bear any moral responsibility for their choices, but it does absolve God of the sole responsibility for evil. This is indeed Augustine's view. And if he allows to unfallen creatures a will which is free in the libertarian sense, then he may be able to prevent the conclusion that God simply determines the created will to choose moral evil. Augustine certainly sees a distinction between the unfallen

and the fallen will. I shall argue, though, that he is a consistent compatibilist and thus is unable to avoid the difficult consequence that created agency is only a secondary agency. God is the only primary agent and, though Augustine insists that his view does not entail it, it seems to follow that God must bear the ultimate responsibility for sin. A careful look at Augustine's analysis of the causes for the first sins will prove the case.

## THE CAUSES OF THE FIRST SINS

In *De correptione et gratia* (written 426/427), one of the later anti-Pelagian works, Augustine draws a clear distinction between

Adam's will before the Fall, and the human will in its present condition. In answer to the question of how Adam can be blamed for failing to persevere in the good, if he did not receive the perseverance to enable him to do so, Augustine writes:

If that man had not abandoned this help through free choice, he would always have been good, but he abandoned it and was in turn abandoned. This help was, of course, such that he could abandon it if he willed to and could remain in it if he willed to, not such that it would make him to will this. ... For he could have persevered if he willed to, but his not willing to do so came from his free choice which was at that point so free that he was able to will both good and evil.

Positing an ability to choose between good and evil is consistent with compatibilism. The question is this: is the difference between the pre-lapsarian and the post-lapsarian will that the former has libertarian freedom while the latter does not? Or is the difference that, after the Fall the will is inexorably drawn downwards to sin, unless by God's grace it is inexorably drawn upwards to salvation, while before the Fall Adam's will was drawn towards the good but in such a way that, upon the arising of new desires, it could judge the newly presented objects desirable and choose to sin or to persevere in

the good depending upon the character of the new desires. This would be a compatibilist freedom to choose between good and evil. Augustine can maintain that God did not make Adam with a defective *nature* such that he must sin by a sort of natural necessity. Adam might not have sinned, had he desired to persevere in the good more than to abandon it. But the created agent is not the creator of its desires, and if pre-lapsarian freedom was compatibilist, then Adam was drawn inevitably by a desire for which he does not bear the ultimate responsibility. God might have implanted in him the desire to persevere in the good in such a way that he would judge that choice most desirable and

pursue it. So if pre-lapsarian freedom is compatibilist, it is difficult not to see God as the ultimate source of sin.

It is a mistake to insist upon the libertarian interpretation of Augustine's view of pre-lapsarian freedom on the basis of the judgment that justice seems to require it. That interpretation is driven by libertarian intuitions which Augustine apparently does not share, and in this he is in the company of many contemporary philosophers who work on the metaphysics of free will. Compatibilism has been and is very popular, and it is essentially the claim that the agent bears moral responsibility for choices which were determined by causes

independent of him. And there is very strong evidence for the interpretation that Augustine is a consistent compatibilist.

The best way to make the case is to examine Augustine's clearest and best-developed discussion of the causes of the first sin, and that is in Book 12 of *De civitate Dei* (written 413—27, Book 12 would have been written between 417 and 425) where he discusses the fall of the bad angels. At the most general level, setting aside the difference between being embodied and being purely spiritual, Augustine seems to understand the workings of the human and angelic wills as essentially the same. In the text cited above from *De correptione et*

*gratia*, in the ellipsis between the two passages quoted, he writes, ‘But the fact that [Adam] did not will to remain in [a good will], is of course, his fault, as it would have been his merit if he had willed to remain in it, as the holy angels did. When the other angels fell through free choice, the holy angels remained standing through the same free choice and merited to receive the reward due to their remaining. . . .’

There are three reasons to focus on the *civitate Dei* text, rather than other texts which deal with the Fall of Adam and Eve. First, in analyzing Adam’s choice, Augustine must situate the discussion within the actual *Genesis* texts, which import details

which distract from the philosophical question of how the will works. In writing about the angelic will Augustine can focus on the pure mechanics of the causes of the choices of the good and bad angels. Secondly, with the angels we have a ‘control group’. The good angels did not fall, and so the analysis of the workings of the will is clarified by centering on the question: why did the bad angels fall while the good angels persevered in the good? Thirdly, it is Augustine’s problematic answer to this question which motivates Anselm to write *De casu diaboli*, and so it is helpful in understanding Anselm’s libertarian analysis of the very first sin to compare it to Augustine’s

compatibilist view.

Why, then, did the bad angels fall while the good angels persevered in the good? Augustine insists that the difference does not lie in their nature. The first chapter of Book 12 is entitled ‘Concerning the one nature of the good and bad angels’. The evil choices of the bad angels are not the result of an evil nature, but must be attributed to their wills and desires. We know this because the bad angels are justly punished for this sin, and ‘No one pays retribution for faults of nature but for faults of will’. Then what could have caused them to sin? Augustine answers: ‘If you should seek the efficient cause of this evil will, nothing will be found . . .’. By an ‘efficient’

cause Augustine means something which takes action to produce an effect. There cannot have been a willing agent which caused the first evil will, for the will of the agent would have to be good or bad. It is absurd to say that a good will could cause evil, but were it caused by a pre-existing evil will, then it would not have been the first. The only option left as a cause for the evil will is something which does not have a will, one of those good things lower down on the scale of being which might serve as an object of the perverted choice. But, though inferior, these things are good in themselves, and, again, good cannot be the efficient cause of evil. Augustine has exhausted the possibilities.

There just is no efficient cause for the evil choices of a free will.

There *is* an efficient cause of the will to persevere in the good angels, and it is God. We have seen above that God's grace is the active cause of the will to persevere to salvation in the fallen elect. Essentially the same explanation for a good will holds for the good angels. Either they were created complete with their good wills, in which case the good will must come from the Creator, or it was later given to them by God. It cannot be the case that they were created without the good will and then chose the good on their own. 'If the good angels were at first without a good will and produced it in themselves

without the operation of God, then it follows that, on their own they made themselves better than they were made by God. And that is absurd.' It must be through God's work that they receive this good will because 'they could not have made themselves better than they were made by the best Creator'. 'And the effect of their good will was that they should be turned (*converterentur*) not to themselves who were inferior in being, but to him who supremely exists, so that by clinging to him they might advance in being and live in wisdom and happiness by participation in him' (*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 48, p. 363).

Augustine makes roughly the

same point regarding Adam's will in *Opus imperfectum contra Julianum*. Those who do evil do it through their own wills, but those who do good do it through God.

*[The proposed asymmetry between good choices and bad is certainly problematic. How, if one cannot choose the good except through God's willing, can one be responsible for failing to choose the good? Interestingly, the reverse of this problematic asymmetry appears in the recent 'reason view' of freedom proposed by Susan Wolf. Wolf holds that all of one's choices may be determined, but one is free and responsible when one is able (and caused) to choose well, but unfree and not responsible when one cannot help but choose badly; Freedom within Reason (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 79 – 81. Anselm, without abandoning the asymmetry between good and bad, will insist that the created agent bears responsibility for both good and bad]*

*choices.]*

We must say this, otherwise we would be committed to the view that ‘a man is good through himself, not through God, or at least that he becomes better through himself than through God’. And this is a position which Scripture plainly proves false. When the pre-lapsarian will chooses the good it is determined to do so by God. And yet the angels are meritorious, and Adam would have been had he persevered in the good.

We know why the good angels choose what they choose. But what of the bad angels? There is no *efficient* cause for evil, but does that mean that there is nothing more to be said? Augustine writes

that if someone says, ‘that [the bad angel] himself produced (*fecisse*) the evil will though he was good before the evil will, he should ask why he caused it, whether because he is a nature, or because he is made from nothing. He will find that the evil will arises (*incipere*) not from the fact that he is a nature, but from the fact that that nature is made from nothing.’

[*De civitate Dei* 12.6. In the passage Augustine is actually talking about a human will, since he has introduced an example of two men tempted by a woman’s beauty, but the example is intended to illuminate the choice of the angelic will.]

The cause of the first sin ‘is not efficient but deficient’. The bad choice consists only in deserting

the higher Good for lesser goods, and we cannot grasp its cause any more than we can see darkness or hear silence.

That the cause of the evil will is ‘nothing’ and ‘deficiency’ is a case Augustine makes consistently throughout his career from *De libero arbitrio* all the way through to the book against Julian which he left unfinished at his death. It is important to assess Augustine’s understanding of ‘nothing’ as the cause of evil because, as I shall argue in Chapter 5, though Anselm wholeheartedly accepts Augustine’s metaphysical analysis that evil is a lack or corruption or absence, totally parasitic on the good, he rejects Augustine’s claim that ‘nothing’ can function as a

sort of deficient cause. And it is important to appreciate this rejection because it will help to clarify Anselm's discussion of what *does* cause the choice to sin, a discussion central to understanding his overall theory of free will. There are a number of things Augustine might mean when he holds that 'nothing' is a deficient cause of sin, and recent scholars have offered different suggestions. A canvas of the possible interpretations will support the thesis that Augustine is straightforwardly compatibilist. Even the pre-lapsarian will which chooses evil does so inevitably, drawn by its desires, which desires do not result from a choice for which the un fallen agent can be

held responsible.

A first possibility is this: to hold that the first sin arises ‘out of’ or ‘from’ nothing might mean only that it is the agent’s being created from nothing that allows for the possibility of an evil will. Augustine seems to be saying this in the *Opus imperfectum contra Julianum*. In the dialogue Julian accuses Augustine of a crypto-Manicheanism. Julian argues that saying that ‘nothing’ is a sort of cause for sin is really no different from the Manicheans blaming moral evil on the *tenebrae* (darkness). Augustine insists that his view is quite different. ‘Nothing’ is not any sort of thing at all and has no force or power. When we say that sin is possible

(not necessary) because the creature is made from nothing all we mean is this: things are either from God or from nothing. The Son and the Spirit are from God, for the one is begotten and the other proceeds, and they are co-equal with God. Created things are not from God in the sense of sharing the divine substance. Nor are created things made from some pre-existing substance. If creatures were from God as the Son and the Spirit are, they would be God and so evil would not be a possibility for them. This is why we say that it is creation from nothing which makes evil possible.

But this cannot be all there is to the role of ‘nothing’ as the

deficient cause of the evil will. Creation *ex nihilo* must be seen as a cause of the possibility of the evil will, but it cannot function as an explanation for the first sins. The good angels were equally created *ex nihilo*, and so it is equally possible for them to sin. But the question that Augustine is attempting to answer is: why did the evil angels sin while the good persevered in the good?

A second interpretation of Augustine's claim that 'nothing' is the cause of the first sins is that the original choice for evil is absolutely without a cause, in the sense of being without explanation, radically unintelligible. William Babcock writes: 'If silence is the absence of

sound and darkness the absence of light, deficient causality, it would seem, must be the absence of cause.' Yet Augustine, in speaking of this deficient cause, does hold that we can 'know' silence and darkness, when our ears and eyes fail to perceive sound or light.<sup>66</sup> And silence and darkness, though nothing, have a sort of defective, yet explanatory, causal efficacy. In answer to the question 'Why didn't you see that rock?', 'It was dark' is a comprehensible explanation, although it posits 'nothing', an absence, rather than an efficient cause for one's failure to see. The analogy would seem to suggest, not that the first sins are utterly unintelligible, but rather that they are to be explained by the

absence of something that would have prevented them had it been present.

T. D. J. Chappell agrees with the interpretation that Augustine's appeal to 'nothing' as a defective cause means that the first evil wills are uncaused and unintelligible. The first created agents were rational and wise. If they chose to do something they knew to be wrong, the choice must be unmotivated. Chappell writes: 'Such an action is, by its very nature, inexplicable, simply because the explicability of an action can only mean the possibility of relating it to some good at which it is supposed to aim. But if no good whatever is aimed at by an action as correctly

described, then of course we cannot specify any good to which it is related; and hence it is necessarily true that we cannot explain it.'

Yet Augustine frequently throughout his career discusses the motives for sin. The evil choice aims at a lesser good, not at no good at all. In Book 1 of *De libero arbitrio* Augustine writes that *libido* is what motivates all wrongdoing. In Book 3 he holds that '... the will is not drawn to do anything unless something is perceived. . .'. He goes on to remark that Adam's choice was motivated by Satan's suggestion, but wonders how Satan himself, being the first sinner, could have perceived the option of evil, which

he must have done, since ‘Someone who wills, certainly wills something,...’. He answers that, in knowing God, Satan could recognize his own soul and develop a desire to exalt himself in an inappropriate imitation of God. In *De civitate Dei* immediately after the text on how attempting to know the ‘defective’ cause is like trying to hear silence or see darkness, Augustine inserts a chapter (12.8) on how evil consists in choosing to pursue the lower good over the higher. Pride, for example, which motivates the sin of the evil angels, is a perverse love of one’s own power. Later in *De civitate Dei*, when he is elaborating on the sins of Adam and Eve, Augustine argues that

pride is the beginning of an evil will, ‘But what is pride but desire for a perverse exaltation?’ It is indeed puzzling why a good, rational, and knowledgeable creature would succumb to the desires which lead it away from God, but Augustine is very clear that it chooses on the basis of desire.

Moreover the interpretation which holds that the first sin is unmotivated and inexplicable, would attribute to Augustine what is probably the worst solution, philosophically speaking, to the question of how to assign the respective causal roles to God and created agents in creaturely choice. It entails both the intelligibility problem and the conclusion that

God cannot escape responsibility for sin. Augustine, as all of his interpreters agree, is very clear that God is the efficient cause of the good choice, for example of the perseverance of the good angels. But in the sort of morally significant choice at issue there are only two options. If the agent does not choose the good, then he chooses evil. Thus, if God does not efficiently cause the good choice, the bad choice must follow. On this interpretation, the bad choice is both inevitable *and* unintelligible.

Scott MacDonald offers a different understanding of the deficiency and unintelligibility involved in the first sins, what he refers to as ‘primal’ sin. The choice

to sin is motivated and intelligible in the sense that the will is moved by desire for some recognizably good, though inappropriate, object. The puzzling element is how a desire for the inappropriate object could succeed in motivating choice for a creature made both good and wise, for whom awareness of God is a given. MacDonald suggests that the ‘deficient cause’ of primal sin may be a preceding ‘carelessness in practical reasoning’, a failing to attend to the evidence available, which, while not itself some sort of motivating desire, none the less allows the inappropriate desire to win out. He writes that Augustine’s ‘analysis splits the act of sin into two components—an

act of will and a failure to attend to relevant reasons.' The act of will is explicable in terms of the motivation, but the success of the inappropriate motivation must be explained by the preceding failure. The 'deficiency' is not that the first sins are unmotivated, but rather that the preceding reasoning involves a lack of attention which can plausibly be analyzed as a 'deficient' cause.

This is an interesting suggestion, but there are difficulties with it. It does not succeed as an interpretation of Augustine, since in the texts where Augustine discusses the original sins he does not trace them to any preceding carelessness in practical reasoning. This is not too serious a problem

for MacDonald, though. He explains that he is interested in not only reconstructive interpretation, but also in a constructive answer to the problem of primal sin, and so he admits to extending ‘. . . Augustinian ideas beyond what I can claim to have found explicitly in the texts’.

The more interesting question is whether or not this is a successful extension of Augustinian ideas such that, given Augustine’s analysis of the first sins, the proposed ‘failure to attend’ could play the role of the deficient cause in a way which leaves the agent morally responsible for the first sin. It seems not. MacDonald sometimes writes that it is the initial failure itself which is

'blameworthy—a failure one could and should have avoided'. But Augustine is adamant that blame can attach only to voluntary acts of will. If this initial failure is a voluntary act of will, then it, and not the choice following from it, is the primal sin which needs explanation and which results from some preceding deficient cause. MacDonald holds that the initial failure is not a voluntary act, or indeed any sort of act at all.

*[The status which MacDonald ascribes to the 'failing to attend' is itself difficult to assess. It is not an act, but is none the less an 'instance of agency' (132). One might suppose that, while succeeding in attending to the relevant reasons is an act, failing is not, since it is just a matter of not doing something. But when MacDonald comes to offer an example of the process of*

*Eve's first sin, he writes that her failure to attend to the goodness of God might be explained by her concentrating on other facts she knows about the divine nature. But this is not a failure which consists in a 'not doing'. It is a failure which consists in misdirecting one's concentration (121), and this seems like an act, rather than a simple failure to act.]*

But then, contrary to MacDonald, the failure itself cannot be blameworthy.

Sometimes MacDonald writes as if it is the choice which results from the failing that incurs blame: '... culpability for evil traces back to choices resulting from these failures and no farther'. But if the failures themselves are instances of misdirected attention which are not voluntary acts and not in themselves blameworthy, and the

primal sins are the result of these deficient causes, then the choice is determined by a mental phenomenon not under the control of the agent. How, then, can the agent be responsible for the primal sin?

And, if the issue is Augustine's own understanding of primal sin, one is left with the question of what explains the success of the good angels and the failure of the bad, in attending to the relevant facts. MacDonald suggests that the failure to attend may be genuinely uncaused, in an entirely innocuous way. We do not expect a causal explanation for every instance of *not doing* something, and so a lack of a cause of the failure to attend is not a violation

of any principle of intelligibility. This is a fair point, and useful in MacDonald's attempt to construct a plausible analysis of primal sin and wrongdoing in general. It does not, however, move us towards a non-compatibilist interpretation of Augustine, and hence it does not solve the problem that Augustine's view entails attributing responsibility for the primal sin to God.

Following MacDonald's suggestion, suppose that the difference between the good and the bad angels is that the former succeed in attending to the relevant reasons and the latter fail. Augustine has told us that the good angels do not remain good on their own, but rather through

the grace of God. So, on the present hypothesis, God's grace works as the efficient cause of the good wills of the good angels by causing them to attend properly to the relevant reasons. Without this grace they would have fallen, too. Thus the failure to attend is inevitable without God's grace. Perhaps we cannot point to a cause or reason for the initial failure to attend, but we know that the creature cannot attend on its own and hence will fail without grace. MacDonald's 'Augustinian' analysis of the role of the failure to attend in practical reasoning as an explanation of primal sin and wrongdoing is an interesting and fruitful one. However, it is probably not what Augustine had

in mind. Nor does it supply an interpretation of deficient causality which challenges the compatibilist reading of Augustine and allows him to absolve God of the responsibility for sin.

The most plausible interpretation of Augustine's claim that 'nothing' causes the first evil wills is that 'nothing' is the absence of something the presence of which would have prevented the created agent from following its desires for the lesser good. And this is exactly what Augustine says. In *De civitate Dei* he explains why the bad angels fell while the good angels stood firm. 'Either they received less grace of the divine love than those who persevered in it, or, if both were

created equally good, they fell through an evil will, while the others, receiving more help, achieved that plenitude of bliss from which they are absolutely certain never to fall away.' Since God's grace is the efficient cause of the good will, if it is absent the created agent inevitably follows his baser desires. This is not to say that the first agents chose evil by any necessity of their nature. They could have chosen the good, by their own wills, had God's grace caused them to do so. But it didn't and so they fell, not by natural necessity, but none the less inevitably.

The problem with this interpretation is that it leaves Augustine's position open to the

charge that the responsibility for the original evil lies with God, not with the first created agents. The creatures themselves did not produce their lower desires *ex nihilo*. They arise naturally in a being made from nothing. And then God fails to help when He could do so. Babcock writes that here Augustine ‘has at least intimated that the origin of the evil will lies outside the will itself and ultimately implicates the God who gave grace to some but not to others. . . the first evil will, in the end, is not an instance of moral agency’. Babcock sees Augustine as vacillating uneasily between the view that the first sin is radically unintelligible and the view that it is explained as caused by the absence

of divine grace, without embracing either problematic position.

But the only reason to argue that Augustine does not clear-sightedly hold that the first sins are caused by the creature's inevitably pursuing its base desires due to a lack of grace is the libertarian intuition that a rational agent is not morally responsible for choices which are ultimately determined by causes which are entirely outside of his control. Augustine clearly and explicitly disagrees with this intuition. The good angels of *De civitate Dei* Book 12, and the elect of the later anti-Pelagian works, are, in Augustine's view, morally responsible agents. They choose

the good voluntarily. They are the appropriate objects of moral praise. They merit heaven for their good wills. And their good wills are efficiently caused by God. Since Augustine says that the created agent is morally responsible for the good it wills when its will is moved in one direction by the efficient causality of divine grace, there is no reason to suppose that he must balk at saying that the created agent is morally responsible for the evil it wills when its will is moved in the other direction by the deficient causality of innate base desire, unaided by divine grace.

Though there are differences between the pre-lapsarian and the post-lapsarian will, they do not go

as deep as the basic workings of the will. On Augustine's account, creaturely freedom is compatibilist before and after the Fall. This entails that the human condition is not changed as radically by the first human sins as it might seem. Before the Fall, man needed grace to persevere in the original good condition. After the Fall man needs a somewhat different grace to rescue him from his sinful condition and turn him towards salvation. But in either case without grace we are damned and with it we are saved, and all freely through our own wills, and all ultimately God's doing.

This is an extremely problematic position. It leaves no room for any 'primary' agency on the part of the

rational creature. It seems to follow that God is indeed ‘the author of sin’. Augustine says that he denies this latter conclusion. But he does not explain how he can deny the conclusion when his view entails that all creaturely choices are determined, and they are determined by causes which stem from the will of God. If Augustine’s later, anti-Pelagian, works go too far in allowing no originating causal efficacy to the human will, the problem is not that Augustine went to extremes in the heat of his anti-heretical polemics. The problem is the underlying compatibilism which seems to have been his understanding of free will from his earliest writings on the subject and

which applies to his analyses of both the pre-lapsarian and the post-lapsarian will. If sin is really blameworthy and God is good and just, compatibilism is false.

## AFTER AUGUSTINE

After Augustine a number of thinkers concerned themselves with specific problems relating to free will. The very quick sketch here will be fleshed out in detail as the issues arise in later chapters of this work. Starting while Augustine was still alive, and continuing into the sixth century, churchmen expressed concern over his predestinarian view of grace. In southern Gaul a number of theologians advanced versions of what some have held to be a

modified Pelagianism. For example, Faustus of Riez held that grace is necessary for salvation, but follows upon the human free will first independently and meritoriously turning towards God. The preceding merit is itself made possible by some original God-given goodness not entirely destroyed at the Fall, and so, he argued, none of the process takes place outside of the scope of divine power.

[*Rebecca Harden Weaver, Divine Grace and Human Agency: A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), 165–80.]

Many modern scholars dispute the appellation ‘semi-Pelagian’,

given that theologians such as Faustus maintained the necessity of grace and the dependence of the creature upon God. None the less the views in question do allow for a sort of preceding merit which inaugurates the process of grace, and which is unrelated to Christ's saving actions, and so they seem to retain the fundamental difficulty with Pelagianism. In any case, the cluster of positions that attempted to make grace consequent upon human freedom were condemned at the Council of Orange in 529.

And yet the Council does not embrace all of Augustine's conclusions regarding grace. It stops short of any assertion that suggests that saving grace is

irresistible and, in the conclusion, insists that ‘... all of the baptized are able and ought (*possint et debeant*), if they choose (desire) to labor faithfully (*si fideliter laborare voluerint*), to fulfill (*adimplere*) with the aid and cooperation of Christ what pertains to the salvation of their soul’. This statement does not absolutely rule out Augustine’s compatibilism, but it does not endorse it either. It insists upon a role for the human agent in the process of salvation, and so leaves open the possibility that, while grace is necessary and unmerited, none the less it is up to the human agent to co-operate with it.

But if the human will is so damaged that it cannot, without

grace, turn to the good, how can it, on its own, co-operate with grace? The problem for Christians of how to reconcile grace, divine sovereignty, and free will did not go away after these early debates, and continues to divide Christian thinkers. Anselm attempts a solution which is entirely consistent with the statements of the church councils, which avoids any hint of Pelagianism, ‘semi-’ or otherwise, but which carves out for the created will a small space in which it functions as an originating cause of its choices. And he recognizes that before he can address specific theological problems he must begin at the beginning, with analyzing what free will means and how it works.

He is the first philosopher after Augustine to attempt such a task.

Boethius (AD 480—524), though he does not attempt a systematic analysis of free will, does contribute significantly to the debate in his *Philosophiae Consolationis*. In Book 5, Prose 6 he develops the position that human freedom and divine foreknowledge are compatible because God's knowledge is eternal. Anselm, as I shall argue in Chapters 8 and 9, builds on aspects of the Boethian solution to offer a theory which may be the clearest explanation of the eternalist answer to the dilemma of freedom and foreknowledge found among medieval philosophers and which

constitutes a significant contribution to the contemporary debate. Boethius, though, does not defend a libertarian view of freedom. In fact, later in Book 5, Prose 6 he explicitly repeats a problematic point which Augustine had raised: God does not know things because they happen, rather they happen because He knows them. God's omniscience is causal and all events, including all human choices, are its effects. The obvious question 'Does God cause sin?' does not come up in the *Consolation*, but it surfaces to trouble Western Christendom in the bitter Predestination Controversy of the ninth century.

In the ninth century, a monk,

Gottschalk, began to promulgate the view that God predestines the good to salvation and the evil to damnation.

[For discussions of the history of the Predestination Controversy see Avital Wohlman, ‘Introduction to the English Translation’, in Mary Brennan (trans.), *De divina praedestinatione* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), pp. xv–xxix. See also David Ganz, ‘The Debate on Predestination’, 283 – 302, and John Marenbon, ‘John Scotus and Carolingian Theology: From the *De Praedestinatione*, its Background and its Critics, to the *Periphyseon*’, 303–25, both in Margaret T. Gibson and Janet L. Nelson (eds.), *Charles the Bald; Court and Kingdom* (Hampshire, UK: Variorum, 1990).]

He claimed Augustine’s authority, and, as argued above,

the claim is difficult to dispute. Scotus Eriugena, arguably the only philosopher in Europe between the times of Boethius and Anselm, was asked by Hincmar, the Bishop of Reims, to write a response. Though Eriugena does not offer a systematic analysis of the working of free will, his treatise, *De praedestinatione*, does ask the question which lies at the root of the problem: if God is omniscient and His knowledge is causal, how can we avoid the conclusion that God causes sin? Yet we must avoid it, Eriugena holds, because the immovable truth is that God is perfectly good, the absolute source and standard for all good, and He does not cause evil. Eriugena draws upon the

Augustinian idea that evil is simply a lack of the good that should be there, and concludes that sin and its punishment are ultimately nothing, neither caused by God, nor even known by Him! Eriugena's treatise apparently infuriated every churchman who got wind of it. Hincmar disavowed the work, and it was condemned at the Council of Valence (855) and again at the Council of Langres (859).

The Predestination Controversy simmered down over time, but without any real resolution being achieved. The issue of God's causal omniscience had to wait several more centuries to be addressed by Anselm. Interestingly, while it is not certain

that Anselm had read Eriugena's *De Predestinatione*, he employs a similar stratagem to solve the problem. He does demur from the most radical of Eriugena's claims and he couches his conclusions more carefully. I shall discuss Anselm's reconciliation of the claim that God causes everything by His knowledge with the claim that created agents cause their own choices in Chapter 6.

The question of whether or not a religiously adequate conception of God's omnipotence can be reconciled with a created freedom robust enough to ground moral responsibility is a terribly difficult one, as its long and tortured history shows. It is a question which divided European

Christendom in the early modern period, and it continues to press upon the philosophically informed Christian today. Saint Augustine struggled long and hard to achieve an adequate reconciliation, but in the end his position seems, at least to many from his day to ours, to give up created freedom altogether. Anselm was an Augustinian. He had consciously and deeply incorporated Augustine's powerful world view into his thinking. And yet he could not rest satisfied with the conclusions Augustine had come to regarding sin and grace. And so, with his characteristic thoroughness and clarity, he went to the foundations of the problem and built a philosophical analysis

of free will which allows for libertarianism within the universe of traditional, classical theism, which offers viable solutions to the perennially troubling dilemmas of grace and free will, and divine foreknowledge and free will, and which foreshadows some of the main developments in the metaphysics of free will at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries.

# 3: The Purpose, Definition, and Structure of Free Choice

Augustine bequeathed to later Christians a number of difficult theological questions related to the issue of free will: was the original sin of Satan and Adam due to an inevitability of their nature such that the real responsibility lies with God? Does the human will play any active role in receiving saving grace? Can freedom be reconciled with divine foreknowledge? If all God's knowledge is causal, is not He the real agent behind all created choices? All of these questions are

aspects of the broader and more fundamental question: in the universe of traditional, classical theism, is it possible that the rational creature can possess a free will such that it is the genuine source of its choices in a robust enough sense to ground moral responsibility?

Anselm of Canterbury does not find in the work of his predecessors an adequate analysis of how the absolute divine sovereignty of traditional, classical theism can be reconciled with true free agency, what I have termed ‘primary’ agency, on the part of the rational creature. In the time since Augustine the issue had surfaced in various guises and occasioned some bitter debate,

but those engaged in the question failed, for whatever reason, to deal with it in the radical way required to achieve a workable solution—radical in the literal sense. They did not go to the roots of the problem. Whether it was due to lack of training or of interest or of innate ability, no one between the times of Augustine and Anselm took the necessary step back to address systematically the preliminary philosophical questions of the definition and workings of created free will. But without knowing what the created free will is and how it works, the task of showing how it can exist in the universe of traditional, classical theism cannot even be begun, much less completed.

Anselm's work is truly remarkable. Though he is operating within the framework of certain traditional, classical theist premises, when it comes to his project of systematically developing a philosophy of free will, he strides into uncharted territory armed only with his own analytic genius. He would perhaps eschew the label 'original', which was not a compliment in his day. But the fact is that he is the first to propose a metaphysics of freedom which can allow for the reconciliation of divine sovereignty and created agency and solve the problems that had troubled Christendom since Augustine's day. This is of tremendous historical significance,

of course, but even more importantly Anselm's work is so careful and so sophisticated that it prefigures and engages with issues and arguments in the contemporary philosophy of free will. His analysis of freedom may still be the most adequate for the classically minded theist today.

## THE PURPOSE OF FREE WILL

When contemporary philosophers ask about the value of free will, they often attempt to do so without admitting to any particular world view or background metaphysics. A standard position is that we must ascribe free will to human beings, for otherwise we could not hold one another

morally responsible and praise and blame one another as we in fact do. But why is the status quo regarding assigning merit of any value? Does it signal some metaphysical superiority of the human animal over our non-responsible planet-mates? Is it just a useful convention, conducive to human comfort? Perhaps our penchant for praise and blame is based on a primitive illusion which we would be better off without. In the absence of any commitments regarding the nature of reality, the question of the value of freedom cannot be adequately answered.

Anselm does not attempt to set his world view aside. Rather his stated goal is to spell out a

doctrine of free will within the framework of traditional, classical theism. And so, for him, the question of the value of freedom is to be put this way: why did God give us free will? Like many contemporary philosophers and like Augustine before him, Anselm holds that without free will we could not be morally responsible. And a morally responsible creature is inherently superior to one that cannot choose and act as we do. But there is more at issue than just our metaphysical superiority to other creatures. The point of being morally responsible is so that we might be just. (To avoid misunderstanding, note that Anselm offers a non-standard

analysis of the term ‘justice’ not to be confused with the traditional, ‘giving each one his due’. Anselm’s understanding of ‘justice’ will be discussed later in this chapter.) And justice, in turn, is requisite for our achieving the goal for which God made us: eternal happiness in His presence. And why is justice necessary? Because only by choosing justice can the rational creature ‘polish’ the image of God in himself and become a genuine *imago dei*, merititing the happiness for which he was made.

From the beginning of his work on free will, found in his discussion of ‘justice’ in *De Veritate* 12, Anselm is clear that what he is interested in is the sort of freedom which can ground

moral responsibility.

[Alfred Mele takes it as a serious criticism of Robert Kane's analysis of free will, an analysis prefigured in Anselm, that Kane, 'explicitly limits free choices to choices made in the face of internal conflict'; *Autonomous Agents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 207. Mele points out that common sense allows that we freely make all sorts of mundane choices without feeling conflicted. Certainly that is true, but it is an unfair criticism. Kane and Anselm are not engaged in the project of canvassing the common uses of the term 'free'. Rather they are very deliberately concerned to see whether or not human agents have what Kane calls 'ultimate responsibility' and whether or not we can engage in what he refers to as 'self-forming actions'.]

He notes that a horse can will, and even will rightly, but it cannot be just. The 'justice' in question, of

which he is here seeking a definition, exists only in a rational will, and ‘... is that to which praise is due; just as blame is due to its opposite, that is injustice’. The morally significant freedom which can ground praise and blame is his consistent concern throughout the next two dialogues, *De libertate arbitrii* and *De casu diaboli*, which Anselm asked to have bound together with *De Veritate* in the Preface to that work. In the first chapter of *De libertate arbitrii* the student interlocutor expresses the worries that motivate the dialogue: is freedom of choice ‘the ability to sin or not to sin’, and do we always have it? If we always have it, why do we need grace? But if we do not

always have it, how can we be blamed for our apparent ‘sins’? And *De casu diaboli* begins with an expression of the problem occasioned by Augustine’s treatment of the first sins of Satan and Adam and Eve. If the bad angels could not hold fast to the good without receiving perseverance from God, and if God does not give it, how are they blameworthy?

Anselm reiterates the point that his concern is only with the sort of free will which can ground moral responsibility in a later treatise, *De concordia*. Here he distinguishes various meanings for ‘choice’ (*arbitrium*) and ‘freedom’ (*libertas*). For example, one might be able to speak or keep silent and

so have ‘freedom of choice’ in that regard, but in the absence of some moral import to the choice, this bare ability to choose one thing or another is not the sort of ‘freedom of choice’ which concerns him. He is interested only in that free choice ‘... which is the seat of justice’ and which is relevant to salvation and damnation. But exactly what is the connection between moral responsibility and the ultimate goal of the created agent?

Justice, about which a great deal more will be said later, is an inherently good thing. In the first chapter of his first philosophical work, the *Monologion*, Anselm argues for the existence of God through the basic platonic claim

that our recognition of various good things proves that there is a *summum bonum*, and in support of this, as if it were a more obvious point, he says that all just things are just through justice, and argues later (*Monologion* 16) that God is Justice Itself, the source of all created justice.

*[In this earlier work he may be using the term ‘justice’ in a broader and more standard way than in the later works on free will. I do not think this possible difference affects his arguments.]*

In *Proslogion* 5 when he begins his project of analyzing the perfections of God, it is divine justice which comes first. So justice is a valuable prize for the creature to possess. Anselm argues

in *De Veritate* 12 that justice can only be had by a creature that can recognize and choose it, and moreover, choose it for the right reasons and through its own power. It is our free will, Anselm argues in *De libertate arbitrii* 2, that enables us to choose justice. Thus, as Anselm points out in *De casu diaboli* 16, the free agent is intrinsically superior to lesser natures, which may be very good in their way, but cannot possess justice. Even the created agent who has lost justice and so is in a state of blameworthy debt bears the mark of the justice which he has lost and hence has a greater natural dignity than the creature which is not capable of justice. Though it must be added that

while the nature is superior and more praiseworthy, the unjust *person* is that much more blameworthy.

Not only is the rational agent intrinsically superior to other creatures, but its freedom fits it for a destiny superior to theirs. Anselm, like Augustine and, to my knowledge, most medieval, Christian philosophers, held that the ultimate goal for the rational creature is happiness—perfect, everlasting happiness with God. Some scholars, focusing on Anselm's claim that our morally significant choice decides between justice and benefit, see him as departing from standard medieval eudaemonism. I shall argue later in this chapter that this

non-eudaemonic interpretation rests on a misunderstanding of Anselm's proposed objects of choice. On the contrary, Anselm takes as one of his major premises in the *Cur deus homo* that '... man was made for happiness'. But he insists, in this work, in the earlier dialogues on freedom, and in the later *De concordia*, that a rational nature should not, and in fact cannot, be happy unless it deserves to be, that is, unless it is just. '[One] neither is able nor ought to be happy unless he wills it and unless he wills it justly.' 'God's intention, then, was to make rational nature just and happy so that it might enjoy Him. But it could not be either just or happy without the will for justice and for

happiness.' Exactly why this is so will become clear later in the discussion of Anselm's analysis of what it means to be just. Here suffice it to say that the just will conforms to the will of God, and failure to do so inevitably entails misery.

The rational, free agent is intrinsically a better sort of thing than other creatures and is able to enjoy an eternal beatitude not open to them. It is a closer image of God. None of this signals a departure from the standard medieval view developed by Augustine. But on the question of the importance of created freedom Anselm goes further. His view endows the created agent with a unique dignity which marks

a radical departure from Augustine's position on the relationship of creature to Creator. As explained in the previous chapter, Augustine says it is absurd to hold that the created agent, angelic or human, might make itself better on its own. Anselm disagrees. The very reason God gave rational agents free will was so that they might become more perfect images of God by helping in their own creation! In *Monologion* 68 he writes that the very point of our being rational is that we should be able to distinguish the just from the unjust so that we might love God. And our greatest obligation to God is that we should work to see to it '... that that [divine] image

which was impressed by natural power should be formed (*exprimere*) as a result of the will'. In *De casu diaboli* 18 he explains that the reason God gave each angel freedom which entailed the ability to hold onto or to reject the justice given by God was so that, should he hold onto it when he could reject it '... he would be able, in a way, to give justice *to himself* [my italics]'.

And then in *Cur deus homo* 2.10 he offers the clearest expression of the point that the rational agent, through its free will, shares in God's aseity. The issue under discussion is the freedom of Christ, who, according to Anselm, is free although he cannot sin. The interlocutor is puzzled since

Anselm, in previous works, had made it plain that the freedom of men and angels entails, at some point in their history, the power to reject or hold fast to justice. Didn't we say, asks the interlocutor, that if the good angels could not have rejected justice, then they would have no merit in clinging to it? How then can Christ be free? Anselm responds: "Those angels are not to be praised on account of their justice due to the fact that they were able to sin, but rather due to the fact that, in a way, they have it *from themselves* [my italics] that they are [now] unable to sin; in this they are, to some extent, similar to God, who has whatever He has from Himself (*a se*).'" The crucial requisite for freedom and

praiseworthiness, divine and human, is not open options, but rather *aseity*. This does not conflict with the claim, examined in detail in the next chapter, that for the *creature* to have freedom it must choose between genuinely open alternative possibilities. God has given the rational creature freedom of choice, which in the created nature entails the ability to cling to or reject justice, in order that it might, by holding on when it could let go, be just *from itself*, in an imitation of divine aseity necessarily unique to free creatures.

Thus Anselm, contrary to Augustine, embraces the view that the created agent imitates God in being a genuine cause, what I have

called a primary agent. Though all that happens is permitted by God, there are some events in this universe not causally willed by God, but rather willed by, and originating from, the created agent. In the later *De concordia* when Anselm addresses the questions of divine foreknowledge, predestination, and grace, the questions to which Augustine's answers had occasioned such controversy, it is clear that he stands by this radical (at least for an Augustinian) claim. Unlike Augustine, Anselm is willing to allow that the choice of the created free agent can be the source of divine knowledge and that it is open to the human being, through its own choice, to cling to

or abandon God's grace. All that has ontological status is made by God. Creatures do not produce things or even their own choices *ex nihilo*. And yet in created agency there is a trace of independence through which God has given the rational creature the ability to participate in His aseity by freely maintaining a justice it could abandon. How this is possible in the universe of traditional, classical theism is a complex story, the telling of which finds a logical beginning in unpacking Anselm's careful definition of free will.

## THE DEFINITION OF FREE WILL

I shall argue that in terms of the

actual workings of free will, Anselm subscribes to a sort of libertarianism today labeled the ‘self-causation’ view: for a choice to be free it must originate with the agent himself and not be fully traceable back to further causes outside of the agent.

[*Thomas Williams and Sandra Visser suggest that Anselm proposes two definitions of freedom: a normative one, where it is the power to hold on to what is fitting; and a descriptive one, where it is the power for self-initiated action; ‘Anselm’s Account of Freedom’, Canadian Journal of Philosophy 31 (2001), 221–44. Both of these elements are important, but I think it hews closer to the text to treat them as aspects of one understanding of freedom. As Williams and Visser remark, in Anselm’s work the ‘two definitions’ are equivalent (240).]*]

In spite of Anselm's adherence to the claim that all that has ontological status is immediately caused by God, there is a sense in which the agent can bear 'ultimate responsibility' for his choices. I adopt Robert Kane's phrase because it seems to me that Anselm's analysis prefigures Kane's in that the locus of 'self-causation' is found in the winning out of one desire over another, where the conflicting desires themselves are explicable in terms of preceding causes. All that is up to the agent is the ultimate preference of one option over the other. But this is enough to ground the claim that the agent chooses 'from himself' in a way sufficient to allow for moral

responsibility.

[*Robert Kane, The Significance of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). For ultimate responsibility see pp. 60–78. For the concept of ‘self-forming willings’ see pp. 124–8. For ‘plural voluntary control’, that is for the view that the free agent struggles to bring about one or another incompatible outcomes see pp. 133–44. Though Kane and Anselm share a concern to analyze a choice in terms of preceding desires, Anselm does not share Kane’s commitment (pp. 115 – 17) to offering a libertarian analysis which does not invoke any categories or kinds of entities not also required for nonlibertarian accounts. The created, primary agency which Anselm ascribes to human beings is something new in the world.]

In order to defend this ‘self-causation’ interpretation, a thorough examination of

Anselm's insistence on the importance of alternative possibilities and a discussion of his analysis of the causes of sin are required. But these issues must wait until we have looked at his definition of free will. This is because the alternatives, motives, and choices in question occur within a complex framework. Anselm offers a definition of free will which involves a hierarchy of choice, prefiguring that recently proposed by Harry Frankfurt.

[‘Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person’, originally in the *Journal of Philosophy*, 68 (1971), 5–20. Pages cited refer to reprint in John M. Fischer (ed.), *Moral Responsibility* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 65–80. I argue for the similarity in ‘Anselm on Eudaemonism and the Hierarchical

*Structure of Moral Choice’, Religious Studies 41 (2005), 249–68. There is significant overlap between this article and the present chapter, though in the former I also try to make the case that Anselm’s theory is immune from a number of criticisms one might bring against Frankfurt’s. The similarity between Anselm and Frankfurt was first brought to my attention by Stan Tyvoll in ‘Anselm’s Conception of Free Will: A Hierarchical Interpretation’, presented at the Twenty-fourth International Conference on Patristic, Mediaeval, and Renaissance Studies, Villanova University, 1999. My reading of that similarity is significantly different from Tyvoll’s.]*

According to Anselm, the point of freedom is to choose justice, and the choice for justice is what the contemporary literature, following Frankfurt, calls a ‘second order’ volition. It is a choice about what

desires one wishes to have and to embrace. One becomes a real moral agent, in Frankfurt's terms, a 'person', only when one can step back from one's immediate desires, examine them, and then choose to identify with certain of them.

Anselm is not the first to propose some version of such a schema. The previous chapter noted Eleonore Stump's suggestion that Augustine adopts a hierarchical account of free will. I argued that Stump's conclusion that the early Augustine could be read as a qualified libertarian is mistaken, but the view that he accepts some sort of hierarchical approach is quite plausible. In *Confessiones* he discusses being

torn between ‘two wills’. Not, he is quick to point out, that there were two warring powers within him, as the Manicheans had proposed, but rather that he longed to surrender to the new Christian lifestyle which he had come to believe held the path to happiness, yet at the same time he was loath to give up his old habits which kept him mired in his former way of life. The hierarchical element comes in when he meditates on the fact that there seems to be a self which in some sense transcends these conflicting desires and judges between them. And at this point in the *Confessiones* Augustine says that this self has come to identify with and embrace the desire for the new life. In Frankfurt’s terms,

Augustine has a second order desire for his longing to commit to Christianity. None the less he is addicted to his old lusts and does not act upon the desire with which he most fully identifies. Foreshadowing Frankfurt, who argues that freedom consists in being able to act upon the desires which one endorses, Augustine considers himself a slave while he follows the old desires he would like to banish. It is only when he is able to bring his behavior into line with the desires with which he identifies that he considers himself truly free. It should be noted that the comparison with Frankfurt here rests on a bit of equivocation on the terms ‘slave’ and ‘free’. Frankfurt locates freedom in the

harmony of first and second order volitions, while Augustine believes that he has free will, if not ‘true freedom’, whichever set of desires he follows. Still, this discussion in Augustine is an interesting, if not exact, prefiguring of Frankfurt’s analysis of freedom and personhood.

Anselm certainly knew the *Confessiones* and may have been influenced by Augustine’s meditations. However, Anselm’s hierarchical working out of free will, though it depends on orders of desires, is very different from Augustine’s. For one thing, Augustine’s discussion concerns the post-lapsarian condition in which addictive bad habits can play a role. Anselm introduces his

division between first order and second order desires in constructing his definition of free will, so the issue is not a fallen will drawn upwards or downwards. Moreover, Augustine, like Frankfurt, is a compatibilist. Anselm, on the other hand, proposes the hierarchical schema as a situation which permits libertarian free choice, while safeguarding the traditional, classical theist position that all of the existents involved in the choice are from God. So, while it is possible to find a sort of prefiguring of Frankfurt's views in Augustine, the use to which Anselm puts the hierarchical schema is really quite original. This is, of course, an interesting claim

historically, but the more important point is that Anselm's proposal is plausible and philosophically fruitful if one is set on reconciling traditional, classical theism with libertarian freedom. Anselm constructed his definition of free choice very deliberately, and a careful unpacking will reveal the hierarchical framework he proposes for created freedom.

We have seen that for Anselm the point of free will is that it should be just and allow the agent a measure of aseity by which it can imitate God. Thus Anselm agrees to some extent with those contemporary philosophers who define freedom as an ability which is aimed at some good.

*[Susan Wolf is a prime proponent of the*

*position that the value of freedom has nothing to do with open options, but rather with our choosing in accordance with the true and the good; Freedom Within Reason (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).]*

In *De libertate arbitrii* 1 the student interlocutor suggests, as a standard definition, that free will is the ability to sin or not to sin.

[*This definition is expressed by Julian of Eclanum in Augustine's Opus imperfectum contra Julianum 1.80–1 and 6.10, where Augustine makes the same argument against it that Anselm does. We cannot know that Anselm had read this work, though an Augustinus contra Julianum is listed among the works in the library at Bec, the monastery in northern France where Anselm did much of his philosophical writing, in the twelfth century (Patrologiae Cursus*

*Completus, Series Latina* 150, p. 779). But Augustine had written two works on this theme with similar titles. Anselm does offer the same argument, but he does not suggest that the definition smacks of heresy. Scotus Eriugena gives a similar definition of free will in his *De divina praedestinatione* (5.9, ll. 207–8; *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 50, p. 41), not listed at Bec. Some of Anselm's arguments resemble Eriugena's but we cannot know that Anselm had read this work.]

We have already noted that open options play an important role in Anselm's analysis of created free will. However, Anselm is adamant that it would be incorrect to *define* free will as the ability to choose between good and evil. Neither God, nor the good angels in their present state, can choose evil, and

yet we call them free. The student goes on to suggest that God and the good angels may possess a different sort of freedom from ours, subject to a different definition. But Anselm responds, in a clear demonstration of his view that language is used univocally of God and creation, that if the same word is used, there must be a single definition which can apply properly to all instances. Not only does the ability to sin not figure in the definition of free will, but the will is more free when it is unable to sin! He will argue later that, unlike the situation with God, in order for a rational creature to have morally significant free will there must be some time in its history when the

choice between good and evil was a genuinely open option for it, but that is a point *entailed* by the definition given the facts about the world, it is not a part of the definition itself. In *De libertate arbitrii* 3 Anselm derives the definition of free will from the purpose for which it was given to rational creatures. Free will is ‘the power for preserving justice’, and justice is ‘rightness of will preserved for its own sake’. So free will is ‘the power for preserving rightness of will for its own sake’.

Before we can ask what ‘rightness of will’ is, there is the more fundamental question of ‘rightness’ *per se*. Some translators have rendered Anselm’s term

*rectitudo* as ‘rectitude’, ‘uprightness’, or ‘righteousness’. This is misleading in that in modern English these terms all bear moral connotations, whereas Anselm’s *rectitudo* has a much broader meaning, better captured by ‘rightness’. This point will bear significant philosophical fruit. Moreover, in order to grasp what Anselm means by ‘rightness’ one needs to begin not with his discussion of free will in *De libertate arbitrii*, but with *De Veritate*, the work that precedes it in the three-volume set Anselm asked to have bound together. It is important to read the works in the order Anselm requested because it is in the first work that Anselm develops the concept of rightness,

which constitutes the initial step in building the definition of free will. In *De Veritate* Anselm holds that every existent thing, whether proposition, object, or action, has its own truth by participating in the Highest Truth, which is God. This truth is its ‘rightness’, its proper orientation to the divine standard, its being as it ought to be. Thus even inanimate things can have rightness. For example, fire acts rightly when it warms things and a falling stone acts rightly when it falls.

It will be well, before addressing the question of rightness of will, *rectitudo voluntatis*, to say a word about Anselm’s term *voluntas*. As Anselm uses the word it can bear at least three different meanings,

which he enunciates in *De libertate arbitrii* 7, and again at more length in *De concordia* III, 11. *Voluntas* can mean the faculty by which we will something, *instrumentum volendi*. It can also mean the fixed inclination, *affectio*, of that faculty which moves it to will something. I think it is correct to translate *voluntas* in this second sense as ‘desire’, but Anselm is very clear to say that the *affectio* need not be occurrent. It can be a sort of constant attitude of desire. He says, for example, that we have the *affectio* for health even when we are not thinking about it, and then as soon as it comes to mind we do want it. The third meaning is the use of the faculty, *usus instrumenti*. This is

the actually occurrent desire or choice: ‘As when one says “I now have the will for reading” that means “I now will to read”.’ (I do not distinguish ‘desire’ and ‘choice’ as two entirely different and separate phenomena because, for Anselm, as I shall explain in Chapter 6, a choice is essentially the ‘winning out’ of one desire over another.) Thus *voluntas* can mean the faculty of will itself, the fixed inclination of the will, or the occurrent desire or choice, and the proper translation will depend upon the context.

And so to *rectitudo voluntatis*: will desiring what it ought to desire. Anselm explains in *De Veritate* that rightness of will can be possessed only by creatures

capable of desire and choice, but it is important to note that it is not reserved exclusively to *rational* creatures. Many lower animals have desires and choose in accordance with them. When they desire and choose what is proper for them they have rightness of will. The horse which wants to go graze is willing what it ought. And the dog which loves its puppies or the master who is good to it possesses rightness of will. Clearly rightness of will here does not connote moral rectitude or uprightness. Anselm explains that lower animals are not capable of justice because they do not *recognize* and *choose* to have rightness of will, rather they simply have it by nature. To put

this in contemporary terms, borrowed from Frankfurt, according to Anselm the horse and the dog possess and act upon the proper first order desires, but they cannot step back to a higher level and evaluate and endorse those desires. They cannot form second order volitions *about* their own desires.

In order to have justice and hence be morally responsible in a way which allows for praise, one must keep rightness of will *for its own sake*. This is Anselm's definition from Chapter 12 of *De Veritate*: Justice is rightness of will kept for its own sake (*Iustitia igitur est rectitudo voluntatis propter se servata*). It is important to note here that Anselm's term

*iustitia* is used in a unique and very specific way which rules out many ordinary uses of the term ‘justice’.

[In chs. 9-11 of the *Proslogion* Anselm ponders the question of how God can, in justice, punish some evildoers, but forgive and save others. It is understandable, he says, that God should return good for good and evil for evil, as ‘the very order (*ratio*) of justice seems to require this’ (*Proslogion* 9, S.I p. 107, ll. 18-19). One might suppose that here Anselm is using ‘justice’ in its standard sense of ‘giving to each his due’. The 1998 Oxford edition would reinforce this since the translation for *ratio* in this sentence is ‘definition’ (p. 92). If Anselm defines ‘justice’ in the *Proslogion* as giving good to the good and bad to the bad, then his understanding of the definition undergoes a significant change before he writes *De Veritate*. But two things need to be noted.

*First, Ratio does not necessarily mean ‘definition’. It has a much broader application, for example it could be translated ‘reason’, or ‘principle’, or, as I have done, ‘order’. In his later works where he is actually defining justice and freedom Anselm uses the term *definitio*, so I do not think we need conclude that in the *Proslogion* he actually defines ‘justice’ as returning good for good and bad for bad. More importantly, his point in these chapters is that God’s mercifully saving some of the wicked is not unjust. Ultimately he concludes that God is just ‘not because you repay us our due, but because you do what is fitting to your supreme goodness’ (*Proslogion* 10, S.I p. 109, ll. 4-5). In the final analysis ‘The just is only what you [to God] will, and the unjust is only what you do not will’ (*Proslogion* 11, S.I p. 109, ll. 18–19). And this conclusion accords with the definition given in *De Veritate*: Justice is rightness of will kept for its own sake, where the standard for rightness is the will of God.]*

We often speak, for example, of a just court decision or a just treaty, meaning that each party has been given its due. But a court decision or a treaty does not have a will, and a decision or treaty which gives each one his due could be produced by people who are not motivated by any desire to do what they ought to do, and so do not have rightness of will. Such a decision or treaty would not be ‘just’, even indirectly, by Anselm’s definition. In Anselm’s terminology, the court decision and the treaty that give each his due, and so are as they ought to be, are ‘right’ rather than ‘just’. In Chapter 12 of *De Veritate*, the student remarks that rightness and

justice seem to be the same thing, but Anselm disagrees. He points out that the *iustitia* that he is trying to define here is that which ‘... ought to be praised; just as its contrary, namely injustice, ought to be blamed’. But only a person can be praised or blamed. That is, we do not credit the court decision *itself* or the treaty *itself* for its merits or defects. So he holds that the rightness which is *iustitia* can only be in a rational nature (*non est nisi in rationali natura*).

Nor, continues Anselm in that same chapter, is it the person’s knowledge or their actual deeds that are directly praiseworthy or blameworthy in the final analysis. It is the will. Anselm asks: ‘Suppose there were someone

who understands rightly (*recte*) and acts rightly, but does not will rightly. Would anybody praise him for justice?' The student answers, 'No', and that is the correct and obvious answer in Anselm's view. Nor is it enough simply to *possess* rightness of will and hence will what one ought to will. As we have seen, the horse and the dog can do that. The just will must step back and will that very rightness of will. 'Whatever does not *will* rightness [my emphasis], even if it has it, does not deserve to be praised because it has rightness.' The dog can will what it ought, but it cannot will *to will* what it ought. It can possess the appropriate first order desires which make it a good dog, naturally motivated to do

what its Creator made it to do. It cannot possess the second order volition that it should have the desires which make it a good dog.

But even willing to have rightness of will is not enough for justice, since at the second level, one might have a non-praiseworthy motive for desiring and choosing the correct desires. For example, says Anselm, still in Chapter 12 of *De Veritate*, one who feeds the poor out of a desire for vain glory wills that he ought to will what he wills (... *vult se debere velle quod vult*). But his choice is not praiseworthy. Justice requires that one possess the proper motive at the second level and hold on to rightness of will for its own sake. Again:

*iustitia igitur est rectitudo voluntatis propter se servata.*

As we have seen, God gave the rational creature free will in order that it might be just. Having developed the definition of ‘justice’ in *De Veritate*, Anselm can go on in *De libertate arbitrii* 3 to define ‘free will’ as ‘the power to preserve rightness of will for its own sake’. In this treatise he goes on to explain at length that this power is inalienable, that it must act from itself (*sponte*), and that it cannot be moved by any sort of necessity, even the necessity of natural inclination. I shall save these issues until the next chapter, where I defend the claim that Anselm is a libertarian of a

self-causation variety. Here I would like to continue the discussion of Anselm's analysis of free choice as a hierarchical ordering of levels of desires looking at *De casu diaboli* and *De concordia*. This is important in appreciating his doctrine of free will, and will also cast light on his views about what constitutes proper behavior for the rational creature.

## THE TWO *AFFECTIONES*

In *De casu diaboli* Anselm argues that in order for the rational creature to gain merit and in a sense make itself even better than it was made by God it must have the option to cling to or abandon justice. As I shall explain in the

next chapter, this allows for a sort of self-causation without falling into Pelagianism. In Chapter 4 he proposes that in order to have this option the will must receive from God two sorts of desire: the desire for benefit (*commoditas*) and the desire for justice. In this post-Kantian age one might anticipate that the analysis would then go something like this: the creature, confronted with conflicting desires for mere self-interested advantage versus disinterested virtue, can choose rightly, i.e. the latter, or not-rightly (wrongly or in some morally neutral way), i.e. the former. Thus one would interpret Anselm as a sort of proto-Kantian, saying that a choice motivated by the desire

for advantage cannot also be a choice motivated by the desire for virtue. And vice versa, if a choice is motivated by a desire for virtue it is not motivated by desire for advantage.

What I call the Kantian interpretation of Anselm's two *affectiones* may go back at least as far as Duns Scotus, who cites Anselm by name and seems to see the two 'wills' as having very different objects. Scotus writes that through the *affectio* for justice the will '... is able to will some good not oriented to self. According to the affection for what is advantageous, however, nothing can be willed save with reference to self'

[*Ordinatio III*, suppl. dist. 26. I am following the Allan B. Wolter translation in *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 179. I am not competent to assess Scotus's complex and sophisticated discussion of the role of the two wills, and it may be that he ultimately offers something like Anselm's hierarchical analysis. This does not seem to be the view of Scotus scholars, however. See Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 87; Thomas Williams, 'From Metaethics to Action Theory,' in Thomas Williams (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 345–7.]

But this Kantian interpretation represents a serious misunderstanding leading to mistaken conclusions regarding Anselm's views—not only about

the structure of created freedom but also about the nature of good behavior and the just will. For Anselm it is not that there are two mutually exclusive sets of objects of desire, the beneficial on the one hand and the just on the other. Rather there is the set of objects of first order desires, that is the benefits. Anselm holds that everything capable of desiring desires these. It is through possessing benefits that one achieves happiness. ‘The happiness which all rational nature desires lies in benefits. And happiness, recall, is the goal of rational existence. In Chapter 12 of *De casu diaboli* he is clear that, ‘no one desires (wills) *anything* [my italics] unless he judges it to

be in some sense beneficial for him.' Rightness of will consists in the desire for benefits in conformity with God's plan for the creature, as in the examples of the horse that wants to graze and the dog that loves her puppies. The desire for justice is a desire for 'rightness of will preserved for its own sake'. It is therefore a second order desire that one's first order desires for benefits should be properly ordered, should be as they ought to be. It would follow from the point that we only desire and will what we judge to be in some sense beneficial, that if we will justice we must recognize that it is in some sense beneficial. It seems correct to suppose that Anselm would hold that it is to our

advantage to be just, since the ultimate end of justice is happiness. Ordinarily when Anselm speaks of benefits (*commoditates*) he seems to be referring to the naturally desired objects of first order desires, but it seems correct to allow that Anselm distinguishes these objects, what we might call ‘first order benefits’, from the ‘second order benefit’ of justice. But in any case, to will justice entails that one desire to will benefits in the right way, so one cannot possibly will justice without willing benefits.

This interpretation is reinforced in *De casu diaboli* 4 when Anselm explains that the injustice of the bad angel consists not in willing injustice *per se*, but in willing

benefits which he should not have willed: ‘... by inordinately (*inordinate*) willing something more than he had received he extended his will beyond justice (*voluntatem suam extra iustitiam extendit*)’. On the other hand, the justice of the good angels lies not in their willing rightness as somehow *opposed to* benefit, but rather in their containing their desires so that they will only those benefits already bestowed on them by God, benefits they were supposed to will. But there is absolutely nothing intrinsically bad or tainted about the forbidden benefit. It is not some selfish advantage intrinsically opposed to justice. Rather it ‘... was something which [the good

angels] were able to grow towards (*crescere*), which they did not receive when they were created, in order that they might achieve it on account of merit (*ut ad illud suo merito proficerent*)'. The reward for the good angels' holding fast to justice is that they now possess everything which could possibly benefit them and so cannot desire anything which they ought not desire. Again, Anselm's point is that it is always the desire for some benefit which motivates. The good angels now cannot be motivated to will anything but what they have received, since they have received the maximum benefits. Yet he calls them just. The only thing one might desire besides benefits is one's own

justice, but justice itself consists in willing to will the appropriate benefits.

Prima facie this might seem like an excessively self-centered schema: we are motivated only by our desire for some benefit, and justice consists in willing to will the benefits which we ought to will. But I take it that Anselm's *commoditas* covers far more than mere selfish advantage. Anselm never wrote a treatise on ethics or values, nor does he devote any time to enumerating the sorts of benefits rational creatures might desire. In *De casu diaboli* the topic is the first sin of Satan, and Anselm wisely declines to theorize about the exact nature of the benefit which Satan desired to his

downfall. But it is probably safe to hold, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, that Anselm's thinking on human desires and motivations is close to Augustine's. The effort to clarify or develop Augustine's thought is often the cited or implicit impetus for Anselm's work, and it may be that Anselm did not see any need to discuss human values because he may have felt that Augustine had said enough. In Augustine's view we are always drawn to will what we will by desire, but this is not self-centered. We are social animals with a natural love for other human beings. The very reason that God made the entire race from a first human being is so that we would have the natural

love of kinship for all mankind. But then an individual's will for his own benefit can include a desire for the good of his family, his neighbors, and indeed all of humanity. If we find this natural and universal love scarce in the world, that is a consequence of sin, not of human nature. In modern thought it is common to see the individual as discreet and atomic, essentially unconnected with those around him. For such a creature the desire for benefit would indeed be selfish. But this is not Augustine's view of humanity.

And there is at least some textual evidence to support the conclusion that Anselm is an Augustinian on this point, as on so much else. In *De conceptu*

*virginali* 17 Anselm addresses the question of why God chose to redeem the children of Adam rather than simply starting over with a new race of human beings, or with miraculously conceived and hence sinless members of the race of Adam. He answers that God prefers to complete the work He began originally:

‘... lest, if none of Adam’s natural progeny would be saved, God would appear to have created Adam’s reproductive nature in vain and to have corrected, so to speak, what He had created imperfectly’. The literal, biological kinship that Augustine saw as the source of a universal love is crucially important in Anselm’s view. Or see Chapter 25 of the

*Proslogion*, in which Anselm almost sings of the joys of heaven, in which all of the desires of body and soul are satisfied, and then multiplied for each individual by the number of citizens of the City of God, since all will rejoice in the joy of those they love as in their own happiness, and each one will love all the others as he loves himself. There is no reason to think that when Anselm says that no one wills something unless he judges it beneficial he is arguing that the only efficacious motive is a private and self-centered advantage.

In *De casu diaboli* 13 Anselm proposes a telling hypothesis: what if an angel had been given only the desire for benefits

without the desire for justice? That is, on my interpretation, what if it had been given only the first order desire for benefits without the second order desire that its desires be ordered according to God's command? Anselm says that then it would will only happiness, and it would will the greatest happiness possible which is to be like God. Though this would be an inappropriate thing to will and certainly not just, we could not call it *unjust* either because the angel wills from necessity (this point will be discussed at length in the next chapter). And if, unable to have the higher goods, it should, like a lower animal, desire whatever lower pleasures occurred to it, still it would not be unjust since it does

not have the capacity to select among its desires.

Anselm continues, in *De casu diaboli* 14, what if an angel had received only the will for rightness (*sola accepta sit voluntas rectitudinis*)? That is, what if God had simply given it the desire to will what is appropriate for it? Note that, were the Kantian interpretation correct, the complement to the hypothesis in Chapter 13 in which the angel is given only the will for benefits, would be the hypothesis that God gives the angel only the will for *justice* and not any will for benefits. On my interpretation that would be an impossible hypothesis since the desire for justice is a desire regarding which

desires for benefits one has, and Anselm does not propose it as a possibility in Chapter 14 or anywhere else. Moreover, the point of the chapter is that the one who can will only rightness has neither a just nor an unjust will, since he cannot will otherwise. It is possible for God to give a creature only the will for rightness, but in doing so He has not, and in fact could not, give it a just will. The case is the same as that in which the angel receives only the unqualified desire for benefits. Like the dog who has rightness of will naturally, the angel who wills rightly as a matter of necessity is neither just nor unjust.

It should be noted that earlier, in Chapter 5 of *De casu diaboli*,

Anselm had considered the hypothetical situation in which the angels could not sin but rather ‘preserve justice by necessity’ (*necessitate servaverunt iustitiam*). He says in that case they don’t deserve any special merit. But does even raising the possibility that the angels could be just without the option to choose the wrong thing signal a conflict in Anselm’s thought? I think not. He concludes by saying that these necessarily sinless angels, ‘if you consider it properly, are not correctly called just’ (*Sed nec iusti recte, si bene consideres, dicentur*). This important sentence is omitted in the Oxford translation, though it is there in the Schmitt edition from which

the translation is taken.

Having established the necessity of the two wills, Anselm continues in *De casu diaboli* 14 to explain their relationship. He writes that ‘... [the rational creature] is not able, nor ought, to be happy unless he wills it, and wills justly’ (*nisi velit et nisi iuste velit*). Note the adverb here. There is no suggestion of an inherent conflict between happiness and justice. The implication is that happiness is to be willed in the proper way, i.e. justly. ‘Thus it is necessary that God make each will converge in him, so that he wills to be happy, and he wills justly (*beatus esse velit et iuste velit*). To the extent that added justice tempers the will for happiness it limits the excesses of

that will, but it does not take away its ability for overreaching.' The will for justice does not aim at some object opposed to benefit. It operates at a higher level, curtailing the excesses of the first order desires for benefits.

In a later work, *De concordia* (Book 3, 11 — 13), Anselm again discusses the two wills for benefit and rightness, and again it is easy to see why one might attribute to him a Kantian view which opposes duty to benefit, especially if one came to *De concordia* without *De Veritate* in mind, or if one is working from the Oxford translation which translates *commoditas* as 'advantage' and *rectitudo* as 'uprightness' and 'righteousness'. Anselm explains

that the will as instrument has two inclinations or *affectiones*. One is for willing benefit; the other for willing rightness. He writes: ‘Certainly the will which is the instrument does not will anything unless it is either benefit or rightness’ (*nisi aut commoditatem aut rectitudinem*). The ‘either/or’ phrasing might suggest that the two inclinations move the will towards opposing objects, and that rightness involves disinterested duty, as the Oxford translation of *rectitudo* as ‘righteousness’ suggests, such that if one wills benefit one does not will rightness and if one wills rightness one does not will benefit. This would conflict with my interpretation that the will for

rightness is not directed towards duty *as opposed to* every benefit, but is rather a second order desire for willing the appropriate benefits.

It should be noted first that if the Kantian reading of *De concordia* were correct it would conflict with the earlier dialogues. Anselm explicitly says that the dog and the horse have rightness of will, but surely they are not ‘righteous’ or ‘dutiful’. If *rectitudo* in *De concordia* refers to an uprightness or righteousness which does not on some level take benefit as its object then the term seems to be used in a different way from the earlier dialogues. Further, the Kantian interpretation entails that if a

choice is aimed at ‘righteousness’ it cannot be aimed at benefit. And yet, as I noted above, in *De casu diaboli* 12 Anselm argued that no one chooses anything unless he judges it to be a benefit. One might hold that Anselm’s views had changed from the earlier writings, but in *De concordia* he refers the reader back to his analysis of ‘justice’ in *De Veritate*, so he seems to stand by the earlier work.

More importantly, the discussion in *De concordia* supports my interpretation that Anselm sees the desires for benefit and justice as hierarchically ordered. To motivate the concept of the will as instrument having two inclinations, he gives an

analogy with sight. Just as the will has two ‘aptitudes’ (*aptitudines*) which are its inclinations (*affectiones*), sight has many *aptitudines*, ‘... namely for seeing light, and through light for seeing figures, and through figures for seeing colors’. The analogy is telling. It is not that vision’s many aptitudes are directed towards contrary objects such that in seeing the color one would not be seeing the figure, or in seeing the figure one would not be seeing the light. Rather the objects of the different aptitudes of vision are ‘nested’ such that one sees the figures through the light and the colors through the figures. This suggests that the objects of the will’s two inclinations are ‘nested’

rather than opposed, and so the analogy points to the hierarchical interpretation.

And in this same chapter he makes a point similar to one he had made in *De casu diaboli* 12 that we do not will anything unless we think it likely to prove a benefit. Here he writes, ‘Indeed, through the inclination which is for willing benefit man *always* [my italics] wills happiness and to be happy’ (*Per affectionem quidem quae est ad volendum commoditatem, semper vult homo beatitudinem et beatus esse*).

[*Deconcordia* 3.11, S.II p. 281, ll. 10–11. The Oxford translation insists upon the most Kantian interpretation beyond what the Latin requires. It reads (p. 469), ‘Indeed when disposed to will

*their own advantage, people always will their gratification and a state of happiness.’ ‘Advantage’ often connotes a benefit at someone else’s expense, which *commoditas* does not. ‘Their own gratification’ has negative connotations which *beatitudo* does not. And the Latin does not require that ‘always’ be qualified by, ‘when disposed to will their own advantage...’. The Oxford translation is not impossible, but the more obvious reading says just that we always will happiness.]*

And this becomes important for the hierarchical interpretation when he sums up how the will as instrument became unjust. He never says, or even hints, that the will becomes unjust by choosing benefit *per se*, rather than the wrong benefit. On the contrary, the will for benefit itself was made good, and becomes unjust,

‘because it is not subject to justice, without which it ought not to will anything’ (*quia non est subdita iustitiae, sine qua nihil velle debet*). In the last chapter in *De concordia*, Anselm explains that God created free will in man and joined justice to it so that whatever he wills, he should will it justly (*ut nihil nisi iuste vellet*). But if we always will benefit, the implication is that we can will benefit *justly*. But then there can be no opposition between willing justice and willing benefit. This seems to be the same point he made in *De casu diaboli* 14 where he explains that it is the role of the will for justice to temper the excesses of the will for benefits.

Anselm is addressing a different

issue in this late work, and so he does not offer the painstaking analysis of *iustitia* that we find in *De Veritate*, moving from rightness, to rightness of will, to rightness of will preserved for its own sake. But what he does say accords with the earlier works and supports the interpretation that the will for rightness is a second order desire that one's first order desires for benefits should be properly ordered and limited in accord with the divine will. Thus he is not espousing a sort of proto-Kantianism which pits duty against self-interest and natural inclination. The purpose of created freedom, then, is that the rational agent be able to step back and consciously choose to identify

with the motivations which accord with God's will. In this way free creatures enhance the image of God in themselves, even to the extent of participating in the divine aseity by helping to cause their own justice. That Anselm is proposing a genuine, self-causing, libertarian sort of freedom will become clear in the next two chapters when we look at the role of alternative possibilities and at the source of sin.

# 4: Alternative Possibilities and Primary Agency

## ALTERNATIVE POSSIBILITIES

In the last chapter I discussed Anselm's definition of free choice: the power to keep justice, that is rightness of will kept for its own sake. I looked at his understanding of 'rightness' and of 'will' and noted that the choice for justice is, in the contemporary parlance, a second order volition, a choice *about* one's volitions, that they should accord with God's will. But there is one aspect of the definition of free choice which remains to be analyzed, and that is Anselm's view of what it means

for an agent to have the *power* to keep justice. We have seen that one who wills rightly does not necessarily, *ipso facto*, possess that power. The horse and the dog, for instance, may will in accord with God's will, but they are not just. To have the power to keep justice, one's choice cannot be the result of any determining necessity. It must be *a se*, from oneself. And, in the case of the created agent, though alternative possibilities are not part of the definition of free choice, the requirement of aseity entails that the agent must have the genuinely open option to retain or to abandon rightness of will, and not just in the sort of hypothetical way that compatibilists allow. It is not that

the agent might have chosen differently had circumstances been different. The agent might have chosen differently, with all the circumstances remaining the same. But for Anselm it is not the fact of alternatives that constitutes the core of free will. Alternatives are necessary to allow the created agent to choose *from himself*. It is self-caused choice which is required for the power to keep justice.

Anselm's position represents a clear departure from Augustine's compatibilism. Augustine, even in *De libero arbitrio*, the early work which some scholars take to represent a defense of a robust human freedom, defines 'having in our power' as 'being able to do

what we will'. He then goes on to give as an example of a choice which is free and in our power our willing to be happy. But for Augustine (as for Anselm) it is a necessity of our nature to will to be happy. It is quite in keeping with Augustine's compatibilism that he should hold that the will which is inevitably drawn to will what it naturally desires is both free and morally responsible. Anselm, however, adopts a very different view.

Anselm holds that when the will is moved by motives which lead it inevitably to one outcome, then its choice is necessary in a way which conflicts with the sort of freedom which can ground praise and blame. He develops this position

most clearly in *De casu diaboli*. He argues in Chapter 5 that if the makeup of the angelic will had been such that the angels who remained good were not able to sin: ‘. . . they kept justice, not through power, but through necessity. For which they would not merit more grace from God because they stood firm while the others fell, than because they kept their rationality which they were not able to lose. In fact, if you consider it correctly, they should not be called ‘just’. In Chapter 13 he considers a hypothetical angel who has been given the will for happiness, but not also the will for rightness. The crucial issue is whether or not such a being would ‘be able to move himself towards

willing something other than what he received to will'. That is, would he be able to choose something for which he did not already possess some God-given desire? The answer is, 'No'. Such a being would will happiness—unlimited happiness. In fact he would will to be like God. His will would be inappropriate, but not unjust because 'he wills by necessity'. Without conflicting desires, the one God-given desire simply becomes the only possible choice, and so for Anselm, if the created agent cannot will otherwise, then he wills by necessity. In Chapter 14 Anselm goes on to argue that, had some hypothetical angel received only the will for rightness, that is, it is motivated

only by desires which lead it to choose in accordance with the divine will, the situation regarding moral responsibility would be just the same. ‘Even if he wills what is appropriate, his will is not on that account just, because he had received it in such a way that he could not will otherwise.’

When it comes to the will of the created agent, Anselm, in *De casu diaboli*, clearly subscribes to what is today known as the ‘Principle of Alternative Possibilities’. Anselm’s version holds that for the created agent to be free and morally responsible, he must be able, at some point in his history, to choose between genuinely open, morally significant, options. There must be some moral choice of

which it is true to say, in an absolute sense, that the agent could have done otherwise. Thus Anselm argues that God must bestow upon the rational agent the two sorts of desire discussed in the last chapter, the desire for benefit and the desire for justice. ‘It is necessary that God should make both wills converge in him, so that he can will to be happy and will justly.’ It ought to be remembered, though, that possession of alternative possibilities is not an end in itself. Man could not *be* just and happy unless he wanted to be, and so God has bestowed the two wills not just to enable open options to the created agent, but in order that man achieve his purpose of being both happy and

just.

In the later *De concordia* he continues this theme of alternative possibilities. In discussing his reconciliation between divine foreknowledge and created freedom he seems to equate freedom with the ability to choose between alternatives. ‘Before he [actually] chooses, he is able not to choose, because he is free . . .’. In response to the point that someone might argue that we are sometimes forced to abandon justice he gives the example of one who is put in the situation in which he must lie or be killed. Anselm grants that it might be difficult to choose death over a lie, but not impossible. He has a real choice because he could choose

one way or the other. ‘Although it may be necessary that he give up either life or rightness, no necessity determines which he will keep and which he will abandon.’<sup>9</sup> In his discussion of the two *affectiones* he writes, ‘From these two inclinations . . . come all human merit, whether good or evil’.

But this insistence on open options may seem puzzling in light of the fact, discussed in the previous chapter, that in the first chapter of *De libertate arbitrii* Anselm adamantly denies that reference to alternative possibilities should figure in the definition of freedom of choice. The definition, suggested by the student interlocuter, that ‘freedom

of choice' is 'the ability to sin or not to sin', is summarily rejected, since the good angels cannot sin now, and God cannot sin *ever*. And yet both the good angels and God are properly called free. Regarding the good angels, one might attempt to solve the apparent contradiction by noting that freedom might depend on alternatives some time in one's history as a rational agent, and so although they do not face open options now, none the less these options play a significant role in their status as moral agents. This is correct, but it does not address the question of divine freedom. God is the standard for value and does not have the option to sin. In Chapter 10 I shall argue that in

Anselm's view God inevitably does the one best thing. And yet He is free. If, as Anselm argues in *De libertate arbitrii*, created freedom and divine freedom fall under the same definition, and if that definition does not include any reference to alternative possibilities, why, throughout the course of his works on freedom, does he link freedom of choice with the ability to choose between options? Why does he consistently maintain that, with regard to the created will, motivation which leads inevitably to one choice involves the sort of necessity which conflicts with moral responsibility?

The answer is this: while the definition of freedom of choice is

the same for God and created agents, there is a radical difference between the two kinds of being. God is a necessarily existent being who exists *a se*. That is, He is absolutely independent, not caused in any way by anything outside of Himself. Whatever He does, He does from Himself. The creature has all it has from God, who is the maker of all, and who keeps things in being from moment to moment by His will. The problem of *created* freedom, then, is this: can the created agent itself be said to have the *power* to keep uprightness of will for its own sake if everything about it, including its choices, is immediately caused by God, with no real input from the creature?

To put the point in terms which I have coined: if the creature is at most a secondary agent, then the power to keep justice is really God's power manifested in the agent. Augustine, consistent with his compatibilism, seems content with this conclusion. And it does preserve the absolute sovereignty of God. Anselm, though, cannot accept that God should hold us morally responsible, if we are simply acting out, as a matter of necessity, the inevitable 'choices' resulting from motives He has given us. Moreover, as I shall discuss in Chapter 5, Anselm holds it to be logically impossible that God be the cause of sin. But creatures do sin. Therefore their choices are not manifestations of

the divine will as primary agent. It must be the case that created agents have real power over their own wills. The important requirement for this power is not open options, *per se*. Rather, the open options allow for causal input originating in the created agent. The existence of genuine options enables the agent to choose *from himself*. God chooses from Himself since His very existence is *a se*, and therefore He has the power to keep justice without there being any need for or advantage to open options. But created aseity and hence created power to keep justice require alternatives. Anselm makes this point clearly and repeatedly throughout his work on freedom.

## ASEITY

From the beginning of the analysis of justice in *De Veritate* 12 Anselm emphasizes the importance of the created nature acting from itself. He uses the term *sponte*. Actions taken from natural necessity are not *sponte*. A man and a rock can both be said to behave rightly when they do what they ought. The rock thrown into the air does what it ought when it falls, but surely we do not call a rock just. There is an enormous difference between the two in that, ‘... the man acts from himself (*sponte*), while the rock acts naturally and not from itself.

In *De libertate arbitrii* 2 Anselm sums up part of what he intends to

prove in the treatise. Angelic and human nature sinned, ‘through the power for sinning and from itself (*sponte*) and through freedom of choice, and not by necessity. . .’ When the student asks whether we ought to consider the will of a horse free since it follows its carnal appetites willingly, the teacher responds that the horse’s will is not free since it follows its appetites as a matter of natural necessity. But when a human being consents to what he ought not, ‘he clearly seems to have that consent, not naturally nor by necessity, as with the horse, but *from himself (ex se)* [my italics]’. One succumbs to temptation, not because of some alien force, but rather because ‘he *turns himself*

(*ipsa se convertit*) [my italics] towards that which he wills more strongly'.

The same theme, that the free choice must originate in the agent himself, is continued in *De casu diaboli*. Satan sinned because, 'On his own (*Sponte*) he threw away the inclination [to persevere] which he had. . .' In Chapters 13 and 14, in discussing the hypothetical cases mentioned above where the angel is given only the motive for benefit or the motive for rightness, Anselm clearly expresses what it is to will something, but *not* from oneself. These hypothetical agents are not free and cannot choose justly, but the point is not merely that they are subject to only one motivation

and so alternative possibilities are not open to them. God is in precisely that situation and yet Anselm insists that He is free. What counts is that in each hypothetical case the agent has *received* only one motivation from something outside himself, in this case God. Regarding the angel given only the inclination for benefit, ‘How could that will be unjust or blameworthy, given that he wills *what he has received (accepisset)* [my italics] such that he could not will otherwise?’ it is the same with the hypothetical angel who has received only the inclination for rightness. Even though he always wills what he ought, ‘his will is not on that account just, since *he has received*

*it* [my italics] such that he could not will otherwise'. The inevitability of the agent's choice is a product of God's having given it a single sort of motivation. So the agent wills by a necessity imposed by God. He does not himself have the *power* to keep rightness of will for its own sake, since the causal history of the choice does not include any input originating in the agent. And that is why it is necessary (*necesse est*) that God produce the two inclinations which can converge in the agent.

In *De casu diaboli* Anselm clearly disagrees with Augustine's assessment of the relationship of God to created agent. When Augustine quotes Paul's rhetorical question, 'What do you have that

you have not received?’ he goes on to embrace a compatibilism which allows that created agency consists in the ‘free’ will moved inevitably to a given choice by the inclination implanted by God, or simply moved immediately by God. For Anselm this is not freedom. Certainly all that the creature has comes from God. But God has structured the will of the created agent such that it faces open options and chooses from itself. Augustine found it flatly absurd that the creature should be able to make or cause anything about itself. Anselm sees that as the point of created freedom.

He begins his argument for the possibility that the creature could somehow cause its own justice,

the argument which marks such a radical departure from Augustine and which aims to solve the centuries-old problems which had occasioned such bitter debate, with a marvellously dry and understated exercise in analytic philosophy. ‘We say “to cause” (*facere*) in many ways.’ One usage is when someone could cause something not to be, and yet he refrains. It is not that he efficiently produces this thing. Rather the thing already exists and he chooses to let it continue, when he could have destroyed it. And that is how it is with justice in the created agent. The agent, his will in its entirety, including the two inclinations for justice and for benefit, all come from God. But

this enables the creature to follow the inclination for benefit in the wrong way, and in so doing abandon justice. And since it really could abandon justice, if it does not, it can be said, albeit it a very limited and qualified way, to give justice to itself. God gives both inclinations, ‘so that [created agents] can, in a way, give justice to themselves. Indeed, if they could not remove it from themselves, there would be no way they could give it to themselves.’ And the whole system is from God.

This schema enables Anselm to avoid Pelagianism of any sort. In discussing Augustine’s compatibilism I noted that Julian of Eclanum in Augustine’s *Opus*

*imperfectum contra Julianum*

seems to adopt a libertarian metaphysics of free will. He insists that freedom means the ability to turn to good or evil. But, unlike Anselm, he seems to envision the will as essentially neutral, poised between two opposing objects, the good and the evil, and able on its own to turn to either of them. Thus if it turns to good, it is itself the originator of its goodness. This is not Anselm's view. God creates the will essentially good and supplies it with good motivations. (The will in question is the pre-lapsarian will. Grace after the Fall is the topic of Chapter 7.) The choice before the created agent does not lie in turning towards the good or

towards the evil. The choice is simply to maintain the status quo and hold fast to the justice which it has already received from God, or, by choosing the wrong benefit, to actively abandon justice. Thus Anselm, like Augustine, can hold firmly that the created agent does not have any good which it has not received from God. And yet for Anselm the created agent does confront alternatives such that its own free will genuinely plays a causally efficacious role.

## FRANKFURT-STYLE COUNTEREXAMPLES

In the contemporary free will debate, the claim that morally significant freedom requires alternative possibilities has been

challenged by what are called, ‘Frankfurt-style counterexamples’. A whole literature has arisen attacking and defending Frankfurt’s argument, proposing countless variants on the original counterexamples, and offering numerous exquisite distinctions. A foray into this literature would take us too far afield, but a general sketch of Frankfurt’s argument will allow for an exposition of Anselm’s basic approach to such counterexamples. The scenario usually goes roughly like this: someone is confronted with a choice between A and B. Unbeknown to him, a mad neurosurgeon has implanted a device in his brain such that, if he should start to choose B, the

device will be activated and cause him to choose A. So he does not really have the option to choose B. But in a case where he debates and chooses A, such that the device remains dormant, is it not correct to say that the agent chose freely, although he could not really have chosen otherwise?

Interestingly, in discussing the ‘necessity’ of God’s actions, Anselm seems to agree that Frankfurt-style examples show that alternative possibilities are not necessary to moral responsibility. In *Cur deus homo* 2.5 he discusses the monk who is to be given moral credit for keeping his vows, although, were he to start to break them, he could be compelled to keep them.

[Stan Tyvoll, ‘Anselm, Traditional Libertarianism, and Frankfurt-style Counterexamples’, (*Read at Third Biennial St Anselm Conference, St Anselm College, Manchester, NH, April 2004.*) Frankfurt himself cites Mill’s example of someone choosing to stay in a room which, unbeknown to him, is securely locked so he could not leave in any case. I do not know of an earlier case of ‘Frankfurt-style counterexamples’ than Anselm’s.]

His point is that, as I shall argue in the last chapter, God is free although He cannot fail to do the best, because the root of freedom is aseity. Divine independence does not require open options at any stage in the decision-making process. Creatures are different, though. While the monk might have no choice about staying in

the abbey, he does, contrary to what is supposed to obtain in the Frankfurt-style counterexample, have a real choice. He chooses whether he will stay on his own or be compelled to stay. And for Anselm these are alternatives that make all the moral difference.

To appreciate Anselm's view in away which brings it closer to the contemporary discussion we can cast the example in terms of *De casu diaboli* since in that dialogue Anselm deals more with the interior act of will than with some overt action following from it. It is the choice, and not the ensuing action, that is the real focus of moral significance. An angel has been given the two inclinations in order that it can, in a way, give

justice to itself, due to the fact that it could abandon it. Suppose that if the angel were to start to choose the wrong benefit, and hence abandon justice, God would step in and cause the angel to choose rightness instead. (If my interpretation is correct, God could not really cause the angel to choose justice *per se*.) Presumably God could do this by weakening or extinguishing the inclination for the wrong benefit so that the angel is drawn by its desire to choose rightness. Or perhaps God could simply and directly cause the choice for rightness without any motivating desire. But suppose the angel does not start to choose injustice, rather it simply chooses justice on its own. Is it the case

both that this angel is free and just, and also that it did not, before it chose, confront genuinely open alternatives?

Anselm will deny the second conjunct. The angel which chooses justice on its own is free and just, and it always had open options. First, there is the difficulty of the ‘starting to choose’. If the angel is genuinely free, with libertarian, self-causing freedom, then there is a point at which deliberation ends and the self-caused choice is made. Before this point both options are open, and at this point one is chosen. We could analyze this ‘point’ as instantaneous or temporally extended and continuous, but any scenario which denies that there is

such a point has probably already begged the question against the self-causation libertarian.

*[A discussion of this issue lies outside the scope of the present work, but it should be noted that in analyzing the Frankfurt-style counterexamples (FSCs) the question of the indivisible nature of a choice is extremely relevant. Those who defend the examples as proving that alternatives are unnecessary often seem to suppose that there is an extended, segmented sequence involved in making a choice such that the early stages of the process do not constitute making the choice, nor are they events causally determining the choice, yet these early stages can somehow indicate with certainty that the choice is coming. But, assuming we are talking about an initial choice for which the agent bears ultimate responsibility, the claim of the defender of the Principle of Alternative Possibilities is that the choice is not a certainty until it is actually made. So proposing examples in which there is a ‘starting to make the*

*choice' which is not actually the choice, nor determines the choice, but which shows that the choice is certainly coming, begs the question.* For example, following a suggestion by Eleonore Stump, take a neural sequence,  $q, r, s$ , which correlates with a choice A, and a neural sequence,  $x, y, z$ , which correlates with a choice B. Upon detecting  $x$  and  $y$ , the intervener will step in to prevent B and produce  $q, r, s$  correlating to choice A. As Stump reads this case, the agent does not have open options because he cannot choose B. The entire sequence  $x, y, z$ , must be completed before the choice exists, and the intervener will step in as soon as he detects  $x$  and  $y$ . So the agent chooses A no matter what, but assuming the intervener does not need to step in, we would say the agent is free; '*Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility: The Flicker of Freedom*', *The Journal of Ethics* 3 (1999), 299 – 324. But Stump's suggestion misses the mark. If, barring intervention,  $z$  follows  $x$  and  $y$  as a matter of necessity, and  $s$  follows  $q$  and  $r$ , then the agent was never

*free to choose A or B to begin with, since the hypothesis entails that his actual choices, correlated to the entire series, are determined by neural events which precede them, the early events of the series. If z or s do not necessarily follow, then it is not the case that detecting x and y shows that the choice for B is coming or detecting q and r shows that A is coming. In that case the example fails, since the hypothesis is that the intervener intervenes only when he knows that B will be chosen if he should fail to intervene, and he stands back if he knows that A will be chosen. But he cannot know that B will be chosen on the basis of x and y or A on the basis of q and r.]*

If the moment of ‘starting to choose’ constitutes the responsible choice, then God must ‘wait’ until the choice is made to step in. (God, in Anselm’s view, is eternal, and the time words are ascribed to Him only

for our benefit. Much more on this in Chapter 9 on divine foreknowledge.) Thus the angel had alternatives up to and including the very moment of choice. The alternatives consisted in the angel having the option to choose justice on his own, or to choose injustice, and have God step in the next moment to reverse the choice, such that the angel chooses rightness without having the option to choose injustice.

These are extremely significant alternatives.

*[Thus Anselm opposes John Martin Fischer, who grants that there may inevitably be a 'flicker of freedom' involving alternatives of some sort in the Frankfurt cases, but says that the alternatives are not robust enough to play a significant role in grounding moral*

*responsibility; The Metaphysics of Free Will* (Oxford: Blackwell Publisher, 1994), 141. For a contemporary defense of the view that the alternatives are morally significant see Scott A. Davison, 'Moral Luck and the Flicker of Freedom', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 36 (1999), 241 – 51.]

First, notice what happens in the scenario in which God does step in to reverse the choice for injustice and negate the ability to abandon justice. Without the ability to abandon justice, the angel does not give justice to himself. That required that, at least at some point in his history, the angel had the ability to hold onto justice *while* he could abandon it. If the angel starts to abandon justice and then God makes it impossible that he should

abandon justice, he no longer has the *power* to keep justice and so he is not free. He may will rightly, but he does so by necessity, and so he cannot will justly. He sinks in the metaphysical scale of value towards the level of the good horse and the good dog. So, before the choice, supposing that God will step in should the angel start to will the wrong benefit, the angel, contrary to what the counterexamples are intended to show, does face real, alternative possibilities. It is up to the angelic choice to bring it about that he wills justice through his own power, or that he abandons justice and, assuming the divine intervention, subsequently wills rightly as a matter of natural

necessity, and hence becomes something less than a free agent.

[A similar point is made by William Rowe in discussing the self-causation view of Thomas Reid; 'Responsibility, Agent-Causation, and Freedom: An Eighteenth-Century View', in John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza (eds.), *Perspectives on Moral Responsibility* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 263-85, see pp. 276-7. Reprinted from *Ethics* 101 (1991), 237-57.]

Frankfurt-style counterexamples may challenge some analyses of the necessity of alternative possibilities, but since for Anselm the key is aseity, if a created agent is free, then he confronts genuinely open options.

GOD'S PERMISSION OF

# EVIL

It is a further question, and a central one for the project of theodicy, whether a perfect God could, or would, step in and reverse the choice against justice as proposed in the Frankfurt-style counterexample when applied to *De casu diaboli*. Anselm, of course, holds that God permits the created agent to sin and to suffer the consequences. One reason is that, as I have pointed out, though Anselm subscribes to a different description of freedom, he agrees with Augustine's uncompromising position that the genuinely free agent is a superior sort of thing, even in a state of sin, to a perfectly good lower creature which does the right by necessity.

It is better to be a wicked and suffering human than a good and happy dog. So God would not alter the structure of the will of the created agent to make it so that he does what is right by necessity.

[Augustine, *De libero arbitrio* 3.12–17. Whether or not this view is correct may come down to a matter of ultimate intuitions. Marilyn Adams has argued that the Augustinian tradition is wrong to accord this metaphysical dignity to the created agent. She holds that we are not free in the robust sense that Anselm defends. The advantage of the greater metaphysical distance between God and creature which she proposes is that none of us can ultimately damn ourselves; *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999). I criticize her conclusions in ‘*The Abolition of Sin: A Response to Adams in the Augustinian Tradition*’,

Augustine, in doing theodicy, never proposes what is today called the ‘free will defense’. The free will defense holds that God must permit moral evil, since its possibility is entailed by created freedom. God must leave it up to the creature whether or not the possibility of sin is actualized. As I pointed out in Chapter 2, Augustine disagrees. He says that God could have engineered the history of rational creatures such that they would never have sinned, and He could have done this without infringing on their freedom. God chose not to do this for reasons beyond our ken, but in part explicable by the assumption

that He would use the sin to bring about some greater good. Anselm, on the other hand, presents a full-blooded free will defense. God cannot prevent sin without destroying the freedom of the created agent, and a free creature is so great a good that it is worth the cost in evil.

It might be argued that Anselm's view conflicts with a commitment to absolute divine sovereignty. This commitment was the basis for the theological reasons behind Augustine's compatibilism. And it is true, on Anselm's view, that there are agents at work in the universe who can act against God's will. This need not conflict with divine omnipotence. Omnipotence does not entail

power over the logically impossible, and it is logically impossible, in Anselm's system, that God should wholly cause the choices of a free creature, for good or ill. None the less it is true that in making free creatures who share in his primary agency God has made beings He cannot control. This does not conflict with the claim that He can always bring good out of the evil done by His free creatures, nor with the view that whatever happens happens because God *permitted* it. But it does conflict with the claim that the only causally efficacious will is God's.

Creatures sin. To sin is to will what God wills that you should not will. Therefore, on Anselm's

understanding, free creatures introduce into the universe events which are against the will of God. Does Anselm's view then diminish the divine nature? He does not state them explicitly, but there are at least two, mutually reinforcing responses to the charge. First, the entire system is God's doing. If He chooses to qualify his absolute dominion by carving out a little space in creation for other free agents, it is His own choice and so it cannot be understood as some sort of external limitation on His power. Moreover, we might, as Aquinas proposed, judge the power of a cause by the nature of the effects it is able to produce. A created, primary agent, free in the

libertarian sense, is a much more independent and powerful sort of thing than a secondary agent, free only in a compatibilist sense. That God makes the former rather than the latter is an indication of His power, not a limitation on it. True, He cannot absolutely control us, but that is exactly the point of created *imagines dei* who can act from themselves and participate in the divine aseity.

## ASEITY AND ‘CHARACTER DETERMINISM’

On Anselm’s account alternative possibilities are necessary to created freedom because they enable the created agent to act from himself. This point grounds Anselm’s initially puzzling claim

that the angels who maintained justice are now unable to sin and yet are free. They are free because their present inability to sin is not a matter of natural necessity, but rather a condition they have produced in themselves through their own power by choosing to hold fast to justice when they could desert it. 'The one not willing what he ought not to will, although he could do so, deserves that he should never be able to will what he ought not, and always maintaining justice through a moderate will, should lack for nothing.' It is not that the structure of the angelic will has been altered to close off any options. The inclination for benefit and the inclination for justice are there just

as they were before. But because they held fast to justice, the good angels have received all the benefits they can see to desire, and so it is no longer possible for them to abandon justice by choosing the wrong benefit. It is this free will joined with the inability to sin which Anselm described in *De libertate arbitrii*<sup>1</sup> as being more free than free will which is able to sin. And the reason it is genuine freedom, the *power* to keep rightness of will for its own sake, is that it is an ‘inability’ which is really a strength, which the created agent has caused in himself *from himself*

In the contemporary literature on free will, among those who see alternative possibilities as requisite

for freedom, there is something of a debate regarding whether or not each and every choice, to be free in some important sense, must be between genuinely open options. Those who say ‘no’ argue that even a choice which is in some sense determined by one’s present character may be free if that character itself is the result of a choice between open options in the past.

So, for example, suppose someone debates between options and chooses to do something morally wrong, and is determined to that choice by his character and situation where the key factor is ignorance of the wrongness of the choice. If the ignorance is unavoidable and no fault of the

agent, then the choice was not done freely in the way that is of interest to Anselm. That is, it does not carry with it any moral censure since it is determined by factors outside of the causal range of the agent's power. But if the ignorance is produced by the agent's character, if it is the result of a fixed habit to ignore unpleasant facts which the agent has produced in himself through long years of freely and wrongly choosing to blind himself when doing the right thing conflicts with some selfish interest, then the ignorance is culpable and the choice it determines is made freely in a way that grounds moral responsibility.

On this understanding of free

will, it is obviously an enormously difficult task to assess the extent to which a human agent is responsible for his actions. But in our daily efforts to assess praise and blame we standardly believe that our knowledge of a person's past ought to inform our judgment regarding the extent of his responsibility. The state, too, attempts to reflect the notion that we must take the background of a choice into account, for example it sometimes allows consideration of a deprived or brutalized childhood as a mitigating circumstance when sentencing a convicted criminal. Happily, God, in His omniscience, is in a position to know everything about the history of a choice, and to mete out praise and blame,

taking all the facts into account. He alone can grasp the extent of our responsibility since only He can judge our present condition against all of our history and where it was we started.

Anselm's focus is not so much on each individual choice as it is on the will as instrument, for it is this which is most constitutive of the created agent and determines his relationship to God. Choice is of interest precisely because it affects the moral standing of the will. The will of the created agent becomes just or unjust through the choices that it makes. But this means, as in the case of the angels, that a choice in the past can so form the will that it is turned irrevocably to good or evil such

that in the present it does not confront open options. And yet the will is free because it has its present character from the choices it made in the past, and hence from itself.

Anselm, in the case of the moral status of the angels, proposes that a single choice in the past might cast the die for all eternity. Given that the human scholar is likely to have little information regarding the angelic psyche, it seems pointless to try to assess intuitions relative to this claim about the consequences of a single angelic choice. According to Anselm, the case for humanity is somewhat different in that, through grace, the fallen human being can recover the justice lost at the

beginning. In the course of a post-lapsarian human life it seems unlikely that a single choice should color the will so thoroughly for good or ill that its subsequent morally significant free choices would all be determined by that event—but unlikely is not impossible. One hears, in human history, of moments of conversion so extreme that they lay down a path from which the agent apparently cannot stray. Think of Paul on the road to Damascus. In general it is probably the case that human choices work in a slow and cumulative way over time to build habits which may determine choice, but this seems an empirical point tied to the situations of actual agents, not a matter of

metaphysical necessity for any created agent. In any case, it clearly follows from Anselm's focus on self-causation that the agent bears moral responsibility for choices which are determined by his character, if the character itself is the product of choices originating in the agent. And so for the good angels, it is true that they cannot sin. None the less they are free by Anselm's definition because they have the power to keep justice, which means they have it from themselves that they keep rightness of will for its own sake.

God, as might be expected, is a different matter altogether. There was no option to sin in the divine past. God never had any option to sin, or any past, for that matter. As

I shall explain in Chapter 10, on Anselm's view, God, being the standard for all value, inevitably does the best. There are never alternative possibilities confronting the divine will. And yet God is free. But this should no longer be puzzling, now that we see that the purpose of open options for the created agent is to allow a measure of aseity—choice from himself. The creature exists *per aliud*. If he did not have alternatives, his choices would all be immediately and necessarily caused by the motive provided by God. But then the entire drama would be God's doing with nothing originating from the creature. God, on the other hand, exists absolutely *a se*. There is no

need in the divine will for some apparatus by which it may, in Anselm's words, 'give itself justice'. God is Justice itself, the very standard against which all created rightness of will is measured. God, as Highest Truth, is Rightness which is '... the cause of all other truth and rightness, while nothing is the cause of It[.]' Unlike the freedom of men and angels, which comes *per aliud*, from God, God's freedom of choice 'is from Himself'(est *a se*). Thus His inevitably doing the best in no way conflicts with His power to keep rightness of will for its own sake.

So, for example, Anselm argues in *Cur deus homo* that, since God necessarily does the best, there is a

sense in which He must become incarnate and suffer crucifixion. And yet He is free. Christ ‘... endured his death of his own accord (*sponte*). . . ’(1,8). When God wills unchangeably we may say that His will is ‘drawn’ or ‘impelled’ but this should not suggest any violent necessity, but rather ‘the self-originating (*spontanea*) and desirable tenacity for the received [i.e. received by the Son from the Father] good of the will’.

[*Cur deus homo* 1.10, S.II p. 65, ll. 6—7. I translate *spontanea* as ‘self-originating’ rather than ‘spontaneous’ because in modern English the latter can connote that the event it qualifies occurs in some inexplicable, chance way. This is the very opposite of the claim Anselm is making about the divine will.]

Anselm grants that there is a sense in which God can be said to will by necessity, but this is a necessity which does not vitiate His freedom. ‘This “necessity” is nothing other than His unchangeable honor, which He has from Himself and not from anything else, and therefore it is only improperly called necessity’. True, created agents like the good angels, in order to be worthy of praise and blame, must have at some point the ability to sin. But, as I noted in discussing the purpose of freedom in the previous chapter, they ‘... are not to be praised on account of their justice due to the fact that they were able to sin, but rather due to

the fact that, in a way, they have it from themselves that they are unable to sin; in this they are, to some extent, similar to God, who has whatever He has from Himself (*a se*).

On Anselm's analysis, morally interesting free will does not entail the ability to sin or not to sin as part of the definition. What counts is that one have the power to keep rightness of will for its own sake. But if all real causal efficacy belongs to God, and the rational creature is simply a secondary agent, then the creature does not really have the requisite power and is not free. Only by creating the agent with two sorts of inclinations which can come into conflict and present the will with

options can God bestow upon the creature the ability to choose from itself, and hence to be free and just.

# 5: The Causes of Sin and the Intelligibility

## PROBLEM

In the previous chapter I argued that Anselm sees alternative possibilities as necessary for created freedom of choice. Now it is time to address the difficult question of how and why the will chooses what it chooses. I have argued that Anselm is a full-fledged libertarian, and this means he is faced with the criticism raised by Augustine against Julian of Eclanum known today as the ‘intelligibility’ problem. The libertarian claim is that, at least for some choice in the agent’s history, his ultimate

preference for one option over another is not caused by his character or indeed by anything, given that the will could in some absolute sense and all things considered, have chosen otherwise. The will causes the choice, but nothing determines it to one over the other of the alternative possibilities. I have argued that this is indeed Anselm's position. But does not this leave the actual choice inexplicable, a something which comes from nothing? It seems to be more an accident that happened to the agent, than something that comes from himself. How then can he really be morally responsible for the uncaused and chance event that is his choice? Augustine

embraces a compatibilist analysis of freedom, not just because he judges it the best view to support his theological commitments but also for these very powerful philosophical reasons which lead so many contemporary philosophers to adopt compatibilism.

Anselm is keenly aware of this intelligibility problem. I shall argue that he goes far along the road towards solving it, and in so doing prefigures some important contributions along these lines by Robert Kane, one of the main contemporary defenders of libertarianism. Anselm, though, concludes on a less sanguine note than does Kane. He holds that there is something inexplicable

and ultimately mysterious about self-caused choice. It may be, though, that Anselm's system provides the resources to dilute some of the most negative aspects of this mystery by pointing out that it is exactly the mystery one ought to expect to find attached to an *imago dei* in the universe of traditional classical theism.

## GOD DOES NOT CAUSE SIN

Anselm's views on the mechanics of created free will are spelled out in *De casu diaboli* where he sets himself the difficult task of trying to explain, to some extent, how and why a creature made perfectly good would choose evil. But before turning to *De casu diaboli*

we should look at *De libertate arbitrii*, for it is here that Anselm argues that, whatever the causes of sin, God is not among them. Augustine, as we saw in Chapter 2, leaves himself open to the charge that God is the ‘author of sin’. This follows from both his standard compatibilism and his theist compatibilism, though it is the standard compatibilism that is most fully developed. The theist compatibilism is less frequently stated, but the basic claim that God is the source of all that has ontological status is a constant throughout Augustine’s work. The standard compatibilism is clear in *De civitate Dei* when Augustine allows that the first sins were the result of a ‘defective’ cause, the

absence of the requisite divine aid. God chooses not to extend the grace needed to persevere in the good, and so the agent, angelic or human, is drawn inevitably towards its lower, but none the less God-given, desires. In a few of the later anti-Pelagian texts the theist compatibilism is evident. Augustine suggests that God efficaciously turns the will of the agent to sin. In this he foreshadows the later Calvinist doctrine of the double will; there is in God a revealed will by which He expresses His commandments, and there is also a secret will by which He causes agents to make the choices that they do. In the case of the sinner He secretly wills that the agent choose what His

revealed will has forbidden. But God is not to be blamed because all that He wills is aimed at bringing about the best outcome.

*[I sketch the disagreement between Anselm and the Calvinists in ‘Does God Cause Sin? Anselm of Canterbury versus Jonathan Edwards on Human Freedom and Divine Sovereignty’, *Faith and Philosophy* 20 (2003), 371 – 8. It seems appropriate to label this view ‘Calvinist’ since Calvin is willing to spell it out explicitly. I take it, though, that anyone who holds that God causes all the choices of creatures must adopt this position or something relevantly similar.]*

Augustine does not spell out nor embrace this position with the wholehearted commitment of later Calvinist thinkers, but it is suggested in his work. I argued in

Chapter 2 that this is true even in the early, *De libero arbitrio*. When the question arises of why God permits sin, Augustine does not offer the ‘free will defense’. I took the conspicuous absence of this argument as partial evidence for the compatibilist interpretation which entails that God could prevent sin without infringing on the freedom of the creature. Instead, Augustine responds to the question by pointing out that God can put the sinner to good use. In the later, anti-Pelagian texts he says clearly that God causes sin in order to bring about some greater good. Augustine repeatedly insists that his view does not entail that God is blameworthy for sin. Perhaps

there are possible scenarios on which God causes ‘sin’ under some description, without thereby necessarily being at fault. But certainly it is difficult to see how the created agent can justly be held morally responsible for sins which are ultimately traceable to the divine will as either the defective or the effective cause.

On Anselm’s understanding, explained in *De libertate arbitrii*, God does not cause sin in any way at all. In Chapter 8, entitled ‘That even God cannot remove rightness of will’, he argues that it is *logically impossible* that God cause sin. Anselm holds that to sin is to abandon justice. But justice is a species of rightness, and God is the ultimate standard for

rightness. Thus, ‘The just will is nothing other than the will which wills what God wills that it should will.’ For God to cause sin would be for Him to remove justice from the will, but ‘if God were to take this much-discussed rightness from someone, He would not will that that one should will what He wills that he should will’. The student interlocutor acknowledges that ‘nothing follows more certainly and nothing is more impossible’.

The Calvinist doctrine of the two divine wills might allow one to escape the conclusion that it is logically impossible that God wills sin by saying that sin is not absolutely against the will of God. Rather, God, in His hidden will,

wills what His revealed will forbids. Sin is against God's revealed will, but not against His hidden will. To my knowledge, the doctrine of the two wills had not yet been clearly formulated in Anselm's day and was not known to him. He certainly does not spell it out in order to refute it. But without a doubt he would have found it repugnant. *De libertate arbitrii* follows upon *De Veritate*, the dialogue in which Anselm argues that all rightness is a sort of truth, which reflects and participates in the Highest Truth, which is God. I think it is safe to say that Anselm would find it unthinkable that God would construct the system of created moral responsibility on the basis

of such deep and thorough deceit. Certainly people frequently make mistakes. God permits all sorts of deception. But Anselm takes it that this is a result of our fallen condition, and so not immediately caused by God. We shall see that God allows a certain amount of ignorance to the angels before the fall of the devil, in order to ensure that they have the open options required for free choice. But that God would forbid a choice, secretly cause it in a created agent, and then blame and punish the agent for the choice which He, God, has caused, would be inconceivable on Anselm's understanding of the divine nature.

Moreover, Anselm would not be

impressed with the argument that, on the Calvinist doctrine foreshadowed in Augustine, God would not be at fault because the sin which He has caused is necessary to promote some greater good. In *De casu diaboli* 25 Anselm, without citing Augustine, recaps the suggestion that the Fall of the first sinners is ultimately a good thing because from it others can learn the consequences of sin. The student interlocutor is worried because the good angels seem to have gained the knowledge of the consequences of sin, from which an inability to sin follows, not through their own perseverance, but through the fall of the bad angels. Anselm responds that if

that were the case then the good angels ought to rejoice over the fall of the bad, which is absurd. Had all of the angels persevered in the good, then God would have taught them about the consequences of sin in some other way. ‘When [the bad angel] sinned, and [God] taught what was to be taught through his example, it was not that He was so weak that He could not do it in any other way, but rather that He has greater power because He is able to bring good out of evil, so that no disordered evil should remain in the realm of his omnipotent wisdom.’

The reason that Augustine and Calvin were willing to allow that in some sense God controls sin and

uses it for good, is that they hope to preserve the absolute divine sovereignty. But Anselm argues that if we say that God somehow *needs* the sin to achieve His goals, we impute, not power, but weakness to Him. God can and does bring good out of evil, but this does not mean that the evil is necessary for the good, nor that the evil in some ultimate sense ought to occur. I think it is fair to sum up Anselm's position on the view that God might cause sin in order to promote a greater good this way: If He cannot achieve his goals without the sin, He is weak, and if He could achieve the goals in a way which does not involve causing sin and deceit but chooses not to, then He is not good.

*[This position is relevant to the debate over whether the original human Fall is somehow a ‘fortunate’ one. In *Cur deus homo* Anselm argues that the Fall made the Incarnation in some sense necessary. So good has certainly come of it. However, Anselm does not say that it was necessary to achieve God’s purposes. Anselm never addresses the interesting suggestion made by some medieval philosophers that the Incarnation might follow as a necessity from the divine nature such that it would have occurred even had the Fall never happened.]*

One might argue that the difference in metaphysical stature between creature and Creator renders the move from ‘God causes X to sin’ to ‘God is blameworthy for causing X to sin’ a *non sequitur*, and so it is acceptable to conclude that God

causes sin. Appealing to the analogy of the literary creation, one might point out that, while Shakespeare certainly causes Hamlet to kill Polonius unjustifiably, it does not follow that Shakespeare unjustifiably causes Hamlet to kill Polonius, as if the author were somehow at fault in the death of the old man. And this holds true even though Shakespeare does not use the death of Polonius to achieve some greater good within the world of the play. I have argued elsewhere that Anselm's Neoplatonism does insist upon levels of reality such that the creature can be seen as a sort of barely existing reflection of the Really Real, which is God. And the analogy of the literary creation

is a helpful one in expressing this relationship.

But it does not succeed in capturing Anselm's view of the dependence of the free, created agent upon God. The analogy may help us grasp the great distance in ontological status between creature and Creator, but when it comes to our freedom, we are not as Hamlet is to Shakespeare. If we were, then Anselm's analysis of sin as willing what God wills that one not will would have to be rejected.

*[James Ross writes, 'But if Jones sins in murdering Smith, it is also true that God willed that Jones sin in murdering Smith; and God's will is sufficient for this to be the case' (Philosophical Theology, 265). Smith's will is also sufficient on its level. Ross does not offer a definition of 'sin', but clearly it could not be Anselm's definition]*

*according to which to sin is to will what God wills that you not will.]*

Whatever the literary creation does is wholly and only exactly what its author chooses that it should do. It has no aseity at all. Hamlet is merely the *image* of a moral agent, not a genuine moral agent. He cannot do what a moral agent does and is not wronged if he does not receive justice at the hands of his creator. For example, we would not blame an author if, for his literary purposes—perhaps he is writing an ironic, anti-predestinarian novel—he should inflict everlasting and undeserved damnation on a character who is morally spotless. But a good God could not treat one of His created agents this way.

Clearly, when the issue is the relationship of God to the free agents He has made, the literary analogy fails. Shakespeare is not a creator *ex nihilo* and does not have the power to endow Hamlet with any real independence. Anselm's thesis is that God, in making man in His image, has succeeded in sharing a measure of His aseity. But He can do this only by endowing the creature with freedom and this entails allowing the possibility that the creature sin on its own.

Though Anselm himself does not bring it up, one might raise a further question at this stage. Although God is not the immediate cause of sin, is He none the less responsible for sin

because He is the author of the situation in which the sin occurs, and, though He could prevent it if He chose to, He permits it? There is no doubt that in Anselm's system all that occurs occurs with the permission of God. He could prevent sin by producing a world containing no created free agents, but, on Anselm's understanding, free agency is such a great good that it is worth even the terrible price in evil. God could prevent the effects of sin by stepping in after the wicked choice and rendering the sinful agent incapable of achieving his aims.

*[In defending the view that God ‘... actively wills evil to exist...’, William Mann argues that his position is no more problematic than is the view that God*

*simply permits evil. Even on the latter assumption, since He could prevent evil by intervening in the course of the evil deed, God would be as responsible for sin as if He directly caused it; ‘God’s Freedom, Human Freedom, and God’s Responsibility for Sin’, in Thomas V. Morris (ed.), *Divine and Human Action* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 182–210, see pp. 206–7. But this fails to take into account the point that preventing the consequences of sin closes off live options and hence limits freedom.*

And perhaps sometimes He does so. But were He to render it always impossible that one’s wicked choices should be put into action, this would in practice be the same thing as simply closing off the option to sin since no rational agent would choose to do what they find they cannot possibly succeed in doing. And, as

we have seen, Anselm judges real alternatives to be crucial to created freedom.

Could God have created a world containing only those free agents whom He knew would not sin? That is, could He, before He made them, have surveyed all the possible created agents, known how they would choose should He create them, and then created only those who do not choose injustice?

[William Wainwright suggests this argument against the Arminians in ‘Theological Determinism and the Problem of Evil: Are Arminians Any Better Off?’, *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 50 (2001), 81-96.]

No. As I shall argue in Chapters

8 and 9 on freedom and divine foreknowledge, Anselm does not subscribe to the view advanced by some of the Semi-Pelagians and also by Molina and many contemporary Molinists that God can know ‘counterfactuals of freedom’; how a merely possible agent *would* freely, in some libertarian sense, choose in a non-actual situation.

Anselm’s position is that God’s knowledge of how free agents choose must be consequent upon how the agent actually chooses in the actual world because, given libertarian freedom and genuine alternatives, this is the only possible ground for the truth value of propositions about free choice. This is problematic in that it

entails that something the creature does can have an impact on God, but Anselm is willing to accept this consequence as the inevitable result of the claim that we are primary agents with self-causing choice. And, as I shall argue in Chapter 8, the Molinist account conflicts with traditional classical theism. For Anselm the only alternative to saying that we affect God by causing His knowledge of what we choose is the Augustinian position that there is but one primary agent at work in the world, God, and consequently sin is God's doing. So Anselm must accept that we have an impact upon God, which some will take to be a serious problem with his position. However, his view does

avoid the criticism that God is responsible for sin since He could have foreknown and made only those who would freely choose the good.

*[Alvin Plantinga proposes the thesis of ‘trans-world depravity’ in response to the criticism that were there a God he would have created only the agents whom He knew would always choose rightly. Plantinga’s thesis is that all possible free agents sin in all possible worlds and so, if God chooses to create a world with free agents, He cannot help but create those who will sin. *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 186.]*

God does not cause sin, nor does He bear the ultimate responsibility for it as something He could and should have prevented. The source of sin is the

created agent. Given Anselm's analysis of what free choice *means*, one can only be unjust under one's own steam. As he writes in *De casu diaboli* 18, 'I think you realize that God cannot cause [one to be] unjust in any way at all, unless it is by not causing [one to be] just, when He could do so. Before having received justice, no one is just or unjust, and after having received justice no one becomes unjust except through abandoning justice on their own (*sponte*).'

[S.I p. 263, ll. 26-9. I take it that Anselm's remark that God could apparently cause someone to be just means that God can implant the desire for justice in the creature. From that point on the creature is indeed just, unless it should, on its own, decide to throw the justice away.]

*However Anselm, as we have seen, explicitly holds that if one chooses rightly because God has implanted irresistible motives, then one's choices do not constitute justice.]*

## THE CREATED WILL IS THE SOURCE OF SIN

But if God is not the cause of sin, then the rational creature must be a primary agent. Choice must in some way originate in the creature. How is that possible? Anselm begins *De casu diaboli* with the difficulties regarding Augustine's analysis of the first sins which I noted in Chapter 2. And Anselm's choice of subject is telling. From the Second Council of Orange, early in the sixth century, until Anselm's day, it was Augustine's work on grace and predestination

that many found problematic and that occasioned controversy. But rather than deal with those theological issues, Anselm chooses to address the more fundamental philosophical questions of the definition of free choice and the workings of a created free will in its unspoiled condition. In *De casu diaboli* Anselm focuses on exactly the point in Augustine's work which provides the proof texts for his compatibilist metaphysics of freedom; the compatibilism which, I argued, is really the root of the difficulty with Augustine's analysis of the relationship between divine and created agency. Anselm does not cite Augustine in the text here. He

does not say that his aim is to refute the master to whom he owes so much. And it is possible that he sees his contribution as merely explaining some points which Augustine had left unsaid. But, in fact, he uses the problems bequeathed by Augustine as the starting point for a very different analysis of created freedom and of the relationship of creature to Creator.

In the first two chapters of *De casu diaboli* the student interlocutor, with help from the teacher, undoubtedly Anselm, spells out the problem. ‘No creature has anything from itself.’ All that the creature has and is comes from God. And nothing comes from God except being and

goodness. One might *say* that God is the cause of evil and nothingness, but only in the sense that one can be said to cause something that one could, but does not, prevent. But this is speaking improperly. Properly speaking, God cannot be the cause of evil. True, Scripture may sometimes speak as if God does evil, but, in good analytic fashion, ‘We should not cling to the impropriety of the words which bury the truth, but rather be eager for the propriety of the truth which is hidden within many different forms of expression.’

The student, however, points out that if the question is ‘Why did the Devil fall?’, the standard answer is that he fell because he did not

receive the perseverance to hold fast to the good. And that must be because God did not give it. Everyone agrees that it was God's giving perseverance to the good angels that enabled them to receive it and so hold fast, so then it must be that God's not giving the perseverance is the cause of the bad angel's not receiving it and falling. How, then, is the angel, rather than God, responsible? This is exactly the difficulty left by Augustine's discussion of the 'defective' cause of the fall of the bad angels.

The student's mistake, says Anselm in Chapter 3, is that, while giving is always the cause of receiving, it is not always the case that not receiving is caused by not

giving. God gave all the angels the power to persevere in the good. The devil did not receive the power to *continue* to persevere in the good because he, himself, threw it away. ‘From himself (*sponte*) he rejected the will which he had . . .’ But then the student is puzzled. The devil must have chosen to desert the perseverance, and why would he choose such a thing? But again, the student has made an unwarranted assumption. The devil does not choose (or want or will) to release his hold on the good, but he does it none the less, by choosing to pursue something else in opposition to the good.

*[Note that Anselm here is trying only to explain the relationship between God’s*

*giving perseverance and the created agent accepting it. He is not trying to give an ultimate explanation for why Satan sinned. By the end of the dialogue he has discussed the conflicting motivations and the ignorance which make it possible for Satan to sin, but he concludes that there is no ultimate explanation. Satan could equally have held fast to the good. Anselm never seems to see Satan's sin as a matter of akrasia. He simply does not describe the devil's desire for some excessive benefit and ultimate choice to sin as a 'weakness of will'. A discussion of weakness of will seems more in order in talking about actual human choice, than in the context of analyzing the idealized instance of the first angelic choice. To my knowledge Anselm does not offer any philosophical analysis of akrasia.]*

Anselm gives the example of the miser who has no desire at all to be parted from his money, but gives it up anyway because doing so is

the only way he can get the bread which he wants even more. ‘So I do not say that he did not will when he ought and what he ought because he lacked the will due to God failing (*deficiente*) to give it to him...’. Use of the term *deficiente* is reminiscent of Augustine’s ‘deficient’ cause, and here Anselm explicitly denies that the cause of the first sin was the absence of divine help. He goes on: ‘... but rather that by willing what he ought not, he drove out (*expullit*) the good will through an overwhelming (*superveniente*) bad one’. So it is not that the angel simply fell away due to his passively not receiving the will to persevere on account of God’s not giving it. Nor did he inexplicably

choose not to receive it. Rather he *drove out* the will to persevere by actively choosing something in conflict with it. The very active terms in which Anselm describes the one choice ‘driving out’ the other will prove important in the discussion of the intelligibility problem later in this chapter.

At this point in the argument, *De casu diaboli* 4, Anselm introduces the two inclinations, one for benefit and one for justice, which, as we have seen, are necessary if the created will is to have genuine freedom. It was the possibility that the angel might will a benefit which he was not at that time supposed to will, and which would fall outside of the ‘rightness’ ordained by God,

which sets up the genuine options which enable the angel to give justice to himself by holding fast to rightness of will, or to abandon that rightness and sin. But the inclinations themselves, and all their possible objects, are made by God and are good.

Anselm even grants, in Chapter 6, that the *choice* for evil, as an existent thing, has ontological status which is supported by God. However, the *evil* of the choice is nothing, and is not caused by God. This claim will be examined more fully in analyzing God's causal omniscience in the next chapter, but a brief look at Anselm's discussion of the status of evil is helpful here in making the case that he has indeed parted

company with Augustine in a very significant way. Anselm certainly subscribes to the privative analysis of evil developed by Augustine. Evil, *per se*, is not any sort of a thing. It is the absence of something where it ought to be, like blindness in a human being. It is entirely parasitic on the good, being simply a lack or a corruption. Evil, *per se*, could not be a motivation. To choose evil is really to choose the wrong thing. But everything, in that it exists at all, is good. Evil is simply nothing. And when the question is what makes the will choose evil, the answer is ‘nothing’. Augustine, however, was willing to attribute to ‘nothing’ a sort of causal power. He says that ‘nothing’ cannot be

an efficient cause, but it can be a deficient one. Being made from nothing produces in the created agent an inevitable desire for the lesser and lower. And then the ‘nothing’ which is the absence of the required divine aid results in the will’s being drawn downwards to sin.

Anselm spends a great deal of time answering the student’s questions about evil: what is its status, and if it is really ‘nothing’ why do we fear it? And later in *De casu diaboli* he does his best in explaining the causes of the devil’s sin. But nowhere does he even hint at the Augustinian concept of a deficient cause for sin. He does not try to explain the first sins as, in part, a function of the *ex nihilo*

nature of the creature, nor does he propose that it is a previous failure on God's part to give extra help which allows some angels to sin while the rest, receiving aid, remain good. 'Nothing' is not in any way the cause of sin. The nothing of evil, which is injustice, is the *result* of sin. The nothing of injustice could not possibly precede sin, since it is the 'hole', the absence which is left when the created will which was originally made just has actively thrown away the justice it received by willing something else more strongly.

For Anselm there is no deficient cause of sin, as Augustine had suggested. God does not cause sin. The structure of the created will

with its two inclinations makes sin possible, but it cannot be said to cause it, since the good angel who persevered possessed exactly the same sort of will. How can we explain why the one angel fell while the other held fast to the good? Anselm proposes certain conditions of knowledge which must exist in order for the first sin to be possible. The devil certainly did not foreknow that he would sin. He could not foreknow what, in a real sense, might not happen. (God's foreknowledge is a different matter to be dealt with in Chapters 8 and 9.) And, though he knew that he was *able* to desert justice,

... I do not see that he could even suspect that, without any added

(*accedente*) [the term can mean ‘approach in a hostile manner’] cause he would have abandoned that will [for justice] on his own (*sola se*). I do not deny that he knew that he was able to change the will which he had, but I say that he would not have been able to think that he would ever, in the absence of any other cause, change that will on his own (*omni alia cessante causa sponte mutaret voluntatem*), which he had wanted (*volebat*) to hold on to persistently.

Anselm seems to be suggesting that the intelligibility problem has occurred to Satan.

The devil must know that he ought not to will the inappropriate benefit at that time. Moral responsibility requires some understanding of the moral status

of the alternatives in question. And this knowledge is entailed by the inclination for rightness kept for its own sake without which the agent could not be just, even if it should will rightly. But then, asks the student, wouldn't the angel have known that he would be punished? Anselm responds that he knew he ought to be punished, but he could not know he would be punished. The interplay between God's mercy and his justice is too mysterious for the creature to fathom.

[*De casu diaboli* 23, S.I p. 270, ll. 4 – 5. Anselm, as I have argued elsewhere, has tremendous optimism regarding the ability of the created intellect to come to know the divine. The one place where he simply admits epistemic defeat is *Proslogion* 9–11 on the question of why

*God saves some evildoers and abandons others to damnation; The Neoplatonic Metaphysics and Epistemology of Anselm of Canterbury (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), 225–6.]*

And this ignorance is a necessary facet of the angelic freedom. ‘If, while willing and possessing happiness, he had known [that he would be punished], he would not have been able on his own (*sponte*) to will that which would make him miserable. But then his not willing what he ought not would not be just, since he would not be able to will it.’ Refraining from sin out of fear is not justice. For the same reason, the angel who would persevere in the good ought not to foreknow what the consequences of sin would be. But once the devil

has fallen, the good angel receives the knowledge, crowned with all the benefits he can possibly desire, and so he cannot fall. Still it is through his own choice that he persevered and so the knowledge and the benefits are a merited reward.

[*De casu diaboli* 25, S.I pp. 272 – 3, ll. 20–2. Anselm's discussion here would seem to imply that all the bad angels fell at once. Having no intuitions about the wars in heaven I do not find this implausible.]

The good angel now has the highest freedom of holding immutably to rightness of will for its own sake, and he has it from himself.

The presence of the two inclinations in the angelic will,

certain crucial facts known to the angelic intellect, and certain lacunae in the angelic knowledge are all necessary to explain how the devil could choose sin. But none of this comes to grips with the issue of what actually caused the choice. In the penultimate chapter of *De casu diaboli*, Chapter 27, the student asks ‘... whence came that first evil which is called injustice or sin in an angel which was made just?’ But, as the teacher points out, since evil is nothingness, and nothing neither comes nor goes, it is more appropriate to ask how justice deserted the angel. In fact, ‘If you want to speak properly, it did not desert him, rather he abandoned it himself by willing what he ought

not.' 'But why did he will what he ought not?' asks the student. 'No cause preceded this will, unless it was that he was able to will.' But this ability *per se* is not really the cause, since the good angels were equally able to desert justice. 'Why then did he will?' The teacher responds, 'Only because he willed. For this choice had no other cause by which it was by any means impelled or drawn, but it was its own efficient cause, and effect, if such a thing can be said.' Here we have libertarianism of the self-causation variety stated with brutal clarity and with no attempt to downplay its core problem. Anselm sees that it is difficult to insist that the created will *just chooses* and that that is the whole

explanation for the choice. But in the universe of traditional, classical theism, any explanation, no matter how careful and complex, which traces the causal chain for an actual choice back beyond the will of the created agent, must lead ultimately to God as the cause of the choice. And this is worse than mysterious. On Anselm's analysis it is logically impossible.

## THE INTELLIGIBILITY PROBLEM

Anselm does not go on to try to mitigate the problem of intelligibility. In the last chapter of *De casu diaboli* he reiterates the point made at the beginning of the dialogue that everything about the

process of choice which can be said to exist in any way at all, which does not include the *injustice* of the choice, is caused by God. There are, however, resources in Anselm's system to permit some response to those, like Augustine and many contemporary compatibilists, who find the intelligibility problem simply damning.

The intelligibility problem has two closely related facets: the first is that if the free choice originates in the will of the agent with no preceding cause then it has no sufficient reason; and the second is that, if the cause of the choice is not traceable to the character of the agent, then the agent cannot be truly responsible. As Augustine

complained to Julian, it is just crazy to say that ‘Something exists, but it did not arise from anywhere.’ Some philosophers put these intertwined problems as an infinite regress: unless an act comes from one’s character, one cannot really be responsible for it. And so, as Galen Strawson claims, to be responsible, in the strong, libertarian sense, for one’s act, one must be responsible for how one is mentally speaking, ‘But one cannot really be said to choose, in a conscious, reasoned fashion, to be the way one is, mentally speaking, in any respect at all, unless one already exists, mentally speaking, already equipped with some principles of choice ...’. But then you would have to be

responsible for those principles and have chosen them, and then you'd have to have even earlier principles of choice, and so on. Susan Wolf writes that, 'In order for an agent to be autonomous, it seems, not only must the agent's behavior be governable by her self, her self must in turn be governable by her self—her deeper self, if you like—and this must in turn be governable by her (still deeper?) self, *ad infinitum*.'

A first step to responding to this problem is to note that Anselm is proposing a very modest form of autonomy. Certainly the creature does not bring itself into being in some absolute way, and it cannot be the originating source of its desires and beliefs. It exists in total

dependence on God, and all of its original attributes and properties come from God. But in Anselm's view freedom—real, libertarian, self-causing, freedom—does not require that *anything* about the created agent, before it engages in moral choice, should come from itself. So there is no infinite regress. All that is required is that the structure of the created agent's free will, which is entirely made and sustained by God, should allow genuine alternatives, such that it can cling to the justice it has been given by God, or else abandon it by following, to an inappropriate excess, desires also given by God.

But even if the Anselmian libertarian should insist that there

is no infinite regress because the choice comes from the self, and the self comes from God, the problem of sufficient reason has not been solved. Like the student at the end of *De casu diaboli* we still want to know what explains the preference for one option over another. If there is absolutely nothing about the beliefs and character of the agent that causes the preference, then—to segue to the second key facet of the intelligibility problem—isn't the choice more like an accident that happened to the agent rather than an action for which he can be held responsible? Hypothesize two people, A and B, with identical properties—perhaps they inhabit different possible worlds or are

the same person ‘twice’ with the universe ‘rewound’—facing identical choices between x and y. The libertarian claim is that A really may choose x and B really may choose y. This is essentially the sort of situation Anselm describes with the two angels who, before their morally significant choices, are the same in all relevant respects. But then isn’t the choice mere chance?

The way in which Augustine describes Julian of Eclanum’s understanding of free choice certainly suggests this problem. The will seems to be poised, perfectly still, balanced between two options. And then, without any cause at all, the scale tips to one side or the other. It is almost

as if the agent were struck by lightning, rather than the author of a responsible act of will. But if nothing about the agent determines that he will make one choice rather than the other, isn't the choice just a piece of luck? How can moral responsibility be grounded in luck? And remember that in Anselm's universe, Satan's 'bad luck', if that is what it is, results in eternal damnation.

[Alfred Mele is one of the main developers of the 'luck' problem in Free Will and Luck (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). I am not sure whether or not Mele's version of the luck problem points to difficulties beyond what I have subsumed under the heading of the 'intelligibility problem'. It is not perfectly clear what Mele means by 'luck'. In

Webster's '*luck*' is defined as '*a force that brings good fortune or adversity*' and as '*the events or circumstances that operate for or against an individual*'. '*Luck*', then, suggests something harmful or beneficial which is imposed on someone from outside. And that is rather how '*luck*' seems to function as Mele describes the problem: it is '*just a matter of luck*' that the agent is in the actual world in which he chooses to *x* rather than in the possible world in which he chooses not to *x*. Expressed this way, it seems as if some fate has placed the agent in one world rather than another. But the libertarian view is that it is the agent himself who chooses *x* that makes the actual world be the one in which he chooses *x*, and so it is odd to refer to his presence in the actual world as '*luck*'. This point is developed by Randolph Clarke in '*Agent Causation and the Problem of Luck*', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 86 (2005), 408–21.

Moreover, as Mele understands it, '*luck*' for an agent involves two sorts of things

happening. First the agent makes a choice for which the question of why he made it has no answer in principle. That is the same phenomenon that the intelligibility problem focuses on. Secondly, the choice ‘has an effect on how his life goes . . . good luck or bad, depending on the goodness or badness of the effect . . . (70). This is as close as Mele comes to a definition of ‘luck’. But this second requirement introduces puzzles. If the agent should blink out of being a moment after choosing, but not as a result of choosing, does it turn out that there was no luck problem attached to his libertarian choice? If the effects of his libertarian choice are neutral rather than good or bad—we do not speak of someone having ‘neutral’ luck after all—does it turn out that there was no luck problem? The effects of a determined choice might be good or bad, and we could reasonably call the determined agent, after his choice, lucky or unlucky. Is the subsequent bad luck of the determined agent something different in kind from the subsequent bad luck of the libertarian agent? If the luck

*problem is more than a restatement of what I am calling the ‘intelligibility problem’, then apparently this second criterion is important, but exactly what it adds or how it functions has yet to be examined.]*

In our own day, Robert Kane has attempted to defend libertarianism against this ‘luck argument’. And his proposed defense is clearly prefigured in Anselm’s analysis of free will. Kane points out that it would be strange to deny that someone was responsible for a choice if that choice resulted from the agent’s interests and desires, if the agent had deliberately and through his own effort brought about the choice, and if the agent afterwards recognized the choice as the result

of his own efforts. The luck argument is intended to show that inserting an element of indeterminism into an act of choice renders that choice a matter of luck or chance. But that need not follow, argues Kane. Suppose that the indeterminacy is itself due to the agent. In cases of morally significant choice, it is the conflict within the agent himself which introduces the indeterminism. The agent is struggling between two outcomes, each of which he desires and in some sense is trying to bring about. The motivations which are in conflict are each as fully explicable by the past history of the agent as the motivations recognized in a determinist or

compatibilist theory. It is the effort to produce one outcome which interferes with, and hence introduces indeterminacy in, the effort to produce the other. True, the indeterminacy produced by the conflict results in diminished control of the agent over *each* outcome, but he none the less has what Kane calls, ‘... “plural voluntary control” over the two options considered *as a set*’. The agent’s ‘... “failing” to do one of the options will not be a mistake or accident, but a voluntary and intentional doing *of the other*.

Augustine’s image of the libertarian will in stasis which then suddenly and inexplicably moves one way or another presents the wrong picture in Kane’s view.

Rather, the will is struggling to bring about two conflicting outcomes each of which would be the end result of beliefs and desires, efforts and intentions, on the part of the agent. Either choice is explicable in terms of facts about the agent, no less than on a determinist or compatibilist theory. And this ‘plural voluntary control’ that Kane envisions is exactly the situation which Anselm proposes. The pre-lapsarian angelic will is not in a state of equilibrium, poised between the choice to sin or not to sin. Rather, it is actively willing justice, because God has given it that desire, but because God has given it the desire for benefits, it also desires a benefit which is

inappropriate at the time. The motives producing created free choice are intelligible in that they, like everything that is not God, are caused by God. The bad angel does not choose to abandon justice. He would prefer to be just, and to have the wrong benefit, and so there is conflict. At the moment of decision the choice for justice is actively ‘expelled’ (*expulit*) by the choice to sin. The choice to sin on the part of the bad angel is a result of his own beliefs and desires, his intentions and his active *effort* to bring about the choice. And so he is responsible. As is the good angel in whom the choice to maintain rightness of will wins out.

One might argue that in both Kane’s and Anselm’s analyses the

agent with plural voluntary control is not really free because the very efforts to realize the conflicting goals are not freely chosen or ultimately up to the agent.

[Alfred Mele (*Free Will and Luck*, 52) holds that Kane's response to the luck argument fails because Kane has not shown that each of the conflicting 'efforts' is itself done freely. Mele asks readers to 'imagine that a manipulator compels an agent, Antti, simultaneously to try to choose to A and to try to choose to B, where A and B are competing courses of action that, in the absence of manipulation Antti would abhor performing'. Mele takes it for granted that Antti would not be making a free choice. The obvious move for Kane and Anselm is simply to disagree. The freedom that both Kane and Anselm propose just is a freedom to realize either of two conflicting, morally significant, desires. (Certainly for Anselm the choices in

*question must have moral significance, and Kane's examples usually focus on morally significant choice and emphasize the idea of developing one's character through choices.) Kane and Anselm both take it as given that unless the desires are somehow the effects of previous free choice, then the desires arise from outside the agent. As Anselm would see it, Meles' manipulator corresponds to God, who has given the two affectiones precisely in order to allow the created agent a small space of action from itself. Assuming, as Mele must for the analogy to be fair, that the 'efforts which the manipulator has imposed on Antti involve a morally significant choice, then, if it is up to Antti which of the 'efforts' ultimately succeeds, Antti has libertarian freedom.*

*Mele clouds the issue by having the 'manipulator' impose the pursuit of out-of-character desires on Antti. This introduces something of an identity problem. Has Antti over the years been making self-forming willings to develop a certain character, and the manipulator*

*erases the character that Antti has been building and replaces it with new traits? Is Antti then the same person he always was, just with a few new, odd, and anomalous interests? Has Antti been radically changed? Has he ceased altogether to be, and his place been taken by a new person? Mele's example poses all sorts of questions. But the basic situation in which the freedom of the agent consists only in being able to succeed in one of two conflicting 'efforts' where the causal history of these 'efforts' lies outside of the agent is simply the situation as Kane and Anselm envision it. Perhaps it is, in some respects, an exceedingly modest autonomy, but it is better than no autonomy at all.]*

At least for an original, self-forming choice, it is determined which desires and interests and motivations have brought the agent to the point of struggling to realize two conflicting outcomes. Kane must

say this because he hopes to provide these desires etc. with the same sort of pedigree that the determinist/compatibilist can point to. Anselm must say it because all that has ontological status comes from God. The two *affectiones* which generate the conflict in the will are things of a sort, and so they come from God. Period. If we are talking about an original, self-forming choice, such as that involved in the fall of the devil, the created agent obviously has no say at all regarding the situation in which he finds himself. How then can the created agent be truly autonomous? Anselm's answer is clear. (I suspect Kane would say something similar *mutatis mutandis*)

*mutandis.)* The autonomy of the created agent is, as I have said before, a *very* modest one. All that is up to him is that he hold onto God-given justice, or throw it away. A richer autonomy than that is absolutely impossible in Anselm's universe.

But then, one might ask, if the scope for created autonomy is so narrow, is there any point in positing libertarian freedom at all? What is all the excitement about? Within Anselm's system, located as it is in the universe of traditional, classical theism, created autonomy is severely limited, and yet it represents a radical power. It is a power so tremendous that great medieval thinkers like Augustine and

Aquinas insisted that a created agent could not possibly possess such a thing. What Anselm's ascription of libertarian freedom to the created agent means is that there are two genuine causal forces in the world: God and the free creatures He has made. And these free creatures produce effects which are not products of God's will. They make themselves better *on their own*—a suggestion Augustine found plainly absurd. They can even act against the will of God when they sin. And they can have an effect on God Himself, in that He knows and acts in response to choices for which He determines the available options, but not the outcomes. From the perspective of

traditional, classical theism, this is almost, if not quite, too much autonomy. More would be unbearable, and is, in any case, impossible.

*[In everyday practice this thesis of plural voluntary control poses a significant difficulty when the issue is how to assign praise and blame. For example, when someone commits a crime, might it not be the case that, of the options he was determined to confront, the crime was the lesser evil, the best he could choose under the circumstances. But if the agent made the best choice he could, can he be blamed for the crime? In fact, our legal systems do try to take it into account that the options open to someone may be severely circumscribed by past determining factors. Of course, earthly justice—too close to oxymoronic—likely does not succeed very well in sorting out which choices have been made freely, and what competing options are determined for a given agent.*

*As Augustine opined in De civitate Dei 19.6, it is a tragedy of the human condition that the demands of social order force us to make judgments in ignorance. At least in Anselm's universe earthly justice does not have the final word.]*

Anselm's system allows him to appeal to the resources suggested by Kane to defuse the criticism that the self-caused choice is a matter of mere luck or chance. But there is a somewhat different way of framing the criticism such that the hypothesis of plural voluntary control does not provide a sufficient response. In the contemporary literature, the criticism is often expressed as some variant of the following claim by Saul Smilansky: 'Attributing moral worth to a

person for her decision or action requires that it follow from what she is, morally. . . We might think that two different decisions or actions can follow from a person, but *which* of them does, for instance, in the case of a decision to steal or not to steal, again cannot be random but needs to follow from what she is, morally.'

[*Saul Smilansky, 'Free Will, Fundamental Dualism, and the Centrality of Illusion'*, in Robert Kane (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 489 – 505, see p. 491.]

The criticism of libertarianism is that one cannot be held responsible for choices which do not flow from one's character,

since a choice that does not come from one's character might as well be random. This is a fairly common criticism, but according to Anselm's analysis of free choice, it has the relationship between choice on the one hand, and praise and blame on the other, entirely backwards. It is not that the agent is blameworthy or praiseworthy for making a choice which exhibits a pre-existing moral character in the agent. On the contrary. In Anselm's schema the agent is blameworthy or praiseworthy *after* the choice, because a morally significant choice contributes to the subsequent moral status of the agent. (We can say that the choice itself is blameworthy or

praiseworthy, but only in a secondary sense. Anselm's entire system is colored by the fact that what concerns him is not each discreet choice, but the salvation or damnation of the rational creature.) The devil was not evil before he chose to desert justice. That would be an incoherent scenario because, before his choice to sin, he is simply pursuing the volitions implanted in him by God, and God does not cause sin or evil. The devil makes himself bad *by choosing*. And what he is blamed for is his morally bankrupt condition once he has thrown justice away. Anselm's doctrine of created agency is one of self-causation in two ways. We ourselves cause our morally

significant choices, but also our morally significant choices produce our moral status, and hence, in a way, cause ourselves. Here again Anselm's thought is reminiscent of Robert Kane's, whose concern is 'self-forming actions'.

*[Self-forming actions are those morally important choices which contribute to how we will become. The Significance of Free Will (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 74–8.]*

This view—that choices contribute to the creation of our characters rather than simply flowing from them, and that agents are morally responsible for the characters which their past

choices have produced in them—is, I think, common and intuitively plausible.

[*This is a common underlying assumption of Roman Catholic moral thought. For example, Vatican II in Gaudium et spes, no. 27 holds that morally bad choices, ‘harm their perpetrators more than those who are harmed by them’.*]

This is clear if we look at standard intuitions about punishment.

[See my ‘Retribution, Forgiveness, and the Character Creation Theory of Punishment’, *Social Theory and Practice* 33 (2007), 75 – 103, and ‘Anselm on the Character Creation Theory of Punishment’, *The Saint Anselm Journal* 4 (2007).  
<http://www.anselm.edu/library>

For example, people might justify the execution or permanent incarceration of a heinous murderer with the claim that he is ‘not fit to live among us’. But presumably they mean that he deserves the punishment *because* he is a murderer, and one does not become a murderer except by murdering. That is why the actual murder must be proved against someone. On Smilansky’s view apparently the murderer must be a murderer *morally* before the crime, otherwise he is not really responsible for it. But if, in respect to his moral status, he is a murderer before the crime, then presumably he was ‘not fit to live

among us' before the crime, and punishment would be appropriate, even before the would-be murderer has begun to commit his heinous deed. This certainly conflicts with our standard intuitions about punishment. Anselm's position that we are praiseworthy or blameworthy for what we make of ourselves through our choices is not especially odd or eccentric. It is a much better fit with standard intuitions about punishment than is the view that we are responsible only if our choices are caused by our preceding moral status.

This point ties in well with the standard Augustinian doctrine of divine punishment to which Anselm subscribes. Some people

portray divine punishment as God stepping in, after sin, and imposing misery on the sinner who would otherwise be just fine, were it not for the divine retribution. The Augustinian view is quite different. The real punishment suffered by the sinner is not some extraneous and arbitrary addition on the part of God. The punishment for sin is rooted in the internal corruption which the agent produces in himself, by sinning. Sin is a destruction of the proper order within oneself which makes one incapable of happiness. Adam and Eve plunged themselves into a condition of war by their disobedience; war against God, against each other, and even each

against themselves. This is what sin *does* and why it is to be avoided!

[Augustine devotes the first several chapters of Book 13 of *De civitate Dei* to discussing these consequences of the Fall.]

An adherent of the divine command theory might be able to avoid this conclusion, but on the Augustinian account, God commands what He commands for the benefit of the creature. Hence disobedience is intrinsically self-destructive.

This is why Anselm argues, in *Cur deus homo*, that God cannot simply write off original sin and rescind the punishment. Sin has introduced a deep hurt to human nature which has got to be healed.

*[It is possible to read *Cur deus homo* unsympathetically as excessively legalistic, describing the Fall and the subsequent salvation of the elect as almost akin to a financial transaction. But Anselm is clear that the goal of human existence is happiness (2, 1), and his analogies of the sinner as the pearl that has fallen into the mud (1, 19) and the servant who has jumped into the pit (1, 24) support the interpretation that humanity's paying the debt for sin is more than simple payback. It is the restoration of the corrupted creature to its original purity, the return to the light of one who has fallen into darkness.]*

The contemporary criticism of libertarianism insists that one's choices must flow from one's character if one is to be responsible for them. Anselm, on the other hand, holds that one

creates one's character by one's choices, and the ensuing harm or benefit which blame and praise entail are not extraneous divine addenda, but rather the inevitable consequences of the choices. In *De casu diaboli* 18 he says that the creature, in sinning, takes happiness away from itself, and in holding fast to the good, gives happiness to itself. It is absolutely correct to refer to this happiness or its lack as reward and punishment from God, but that is because it is God who makes and sustains the entire system, not because He steps in at the end with a prize or a whipping. So the criticism which rests on the assumption that one is responsible only for choices which are

symptomatic of, and inevitably flow from, one's antecedent moral character entirely misses the mark on the Anselmian understanding.

Anselm's system allows for responses to some of the key questions posed by the intelligibility problem. None the less Anselm admits that there is an element of mystery in libertarian free choice. The language with which Anselm concludes the discussion of the choice for evil, '... this will... is its own efficient cause and effect, if such a thing can be said. . . ', suggests that he grants that there is something strange and ultimately inexplicable about the choice. True, we can trace the motives which contributed to it, but there were

motives for the other option, too. As Kane's discussion of the principle of plural voluntary control shows, indeterminism does not necessarily conflict with intentional action. The devil brought about his choice by his own conscious efforts. But the same would be true had he chosen otherwise. The difficult spot is that moment of *preference*. We can point to the reasons for choosing each option. But there is no antecedent cause or explanation for the preference of one over the other. It does not really help to add that he made the reasons for one choice outweigh the reasons for the other by choosing, since the outweighing comes *after* the choosing. We still

want to know why the devil chose sin over justice. And Anselm's answer is, only because he chose. There is no more to be said, and this is an uncomfortable stopping point, for it seems to grant that the intelligibility problem is not entirely soluble.

In response to the complaint that one's system includes unintelligible or inexplicable phenomena one might to try to show that it doesn't. An alternative response is to grant the element of mystery, but try to show that the existence of this particular mystery makes sense, or is to be expected. I take it that Anselm sees and is willing to accept that there is a certain mystery at the core of free choice.

But perhaps this need not count as a criticism of his theory. Anselm is extremely optimistic about the scope and range of the human intellect, but his subject-matter, God and the relationship of the created to the Creator, leads him to assume that he will run up against issues that he cannot divide and conquer. We noted above that God's justice towards some and mercy towards others is one such issue. In the *Cur deus homo*, where he is concerned to spell out and clarify the methodology of his investigations, he argues that if reason has concluded that something is the case, the investigator ought to take it as at least provisionally proven, even if he cannot grasp *how* it is

the case. Created freedom seems to be one of those instances. There is sin. God does not cause it. Therefore it originates in the created will, although this seems a mystery.

And it should be added that this particular mystery is exactly what one ought to have expected. From the outset Anselm's project has been to expound a theoretical system by which the created will could exhibit what I have called a primary, rather than a secondary, agency. But in this it is different from all other created causes at work in the universe. The horse and the dog are agents of a sort—at least they act on the basis of desire and will—but they will with the necessity implanted by

God. They necessarily follow a given desire, and God is the immediate cause of all their willing. They are secondary agents, and this is precisely why they cannot be morally responsible. Human agency must function differently from the other causes we see in the world around us. Many contemporary philosophers strongly prefer not to appeal to any sort of causation beyond what we find in the natural sciences.

*[Robert Kane, e.g., spells out as a fundamental methodological principle that he will not appeal to any entities or special forms of agency that are not also needed for compatibilist or determinist accounts (*The Significance of Free Will*, 116–17). And he explains that he hopes to offer an account of free will that ‘... might be reconciled with modern*

*conceptions of human beings in the natural and human sciences' ('Introduction: The Contours of Contemporary Free Will Debates', 26).]*

But it could be argued that, given the nature of the project involved in analyzing free will, it is not that Anselm has been too eager to multiply entities, but rather that those who judge that the natural sciences dictate the limits of reality have drawn the boundary for what there is too narrowly. Many contemporary philosophers, whether libertarian or compatibilist, are concerned to show that human agents can be genuinely morally responsible. And, I take it, they agree that among the living things known to science, we are unique in this.

Their analysis of free will is intended to show that it can be robust enough to ground this responsibility. And yet they balk at the claim that our freedom is as unique as our responsibility. They grant that the investigation of moral truth—whether there is such a thing, what it consists in, and how the human agent can know it—falls outside the scope of the natural sciences. And yet these philosophers often insist that free choice, the process that grounds the agent's moral responsibility, and hence his relation to moral truth, must be analyzed as a phenomenon of the natural sciences. That seems an oddly schizophrenic approach, doomed to yield unsatisfying

results. Anselm takes it for granted that rational creatures are unique in their status as morally responsible, and so of course the structure of their wills must fall outside of the sort of causal patterns that govern the rest of creation.

Even more importantly, the purpose of free will and moral responsibility is that the created agent should be able to be just, possess a measure of aseity, and even contribute, though in a very circumscribed way, to its own being. This is how one becomes a genuine *imago dei*. Some contemporary philosophers, rejecting libertarian self-causation, have expressed their criticism as some variant on the claim that the

libertarian grants to the agent a God-like power to cause itself. And that is obviously absurd. So libertarianism is false. ‘The idea of an autonomous agent appears to be the idea of a prime mover unmoved whose self can endlessly account for itself and for the behavior that it intentionally exhibits or allows. But this idea seems incoherent or, at any rate, logically impossible.’ Yet the logical goal of these [libertarian] ambitions is incoherent, for to be really free we would have to act from a standpoint completely outside ourselves, choosing everything about ourselves, including all our principles of choice—creating ourselves from nothing, so to speak. This is

self-contradictory. In order to do anything we must already be something.' 'The desire for "freedom of the will" in the superlative metaphysical sense . . . involves nothing less than to be precisely this *causa sui* and, with more than Baron Munchausen's audacity, to pull oneself up into existence by the hair, out of the swamps of nothingness.'

Of course Anselm does not hold that the created agent is the ultimate creator of its own being. The honor of being a genuine Creator goes to God, the necessarily existent being, for whom there is absolutely no cause of any sort. One might say that the existence of God is the ultimate mystery, in that it defies any

preceding reason or explanation. And God has constructed the system so that the rational creature can, in however limited a way, mirror this divine aseity by contributing to its own being. It is a dim reflection of its Creator, but it is a true one in that, through free choice, it participates in its own creation. This entails the mysterious position that the created free will is the originator of its morally significant choices. But mystery is not logical impossibility. And in this case the proposed mystery is exactly the one we should expect to find in the universe of traditional, classical theism in which the necessarily existent Creator has produced, in created agents, an

image of Himself.

Anselm's system allows for some response to the intelligibility problem. He does not claim to have offered a fully satisfying causal explanation for free, morally significant choice. Such a thing is impossible. And he appreciates the intellectual discomfort that his self-causation view entails. But a philosophical system without points of tension and brute, inexplicable facts would be hard to find. In a traditional, classical theist universe such as Anselm's any attempt to eradicate the mystery of created, self-originating choice will produce deeper problems than the mystery itself. The calculation is ultimately simple. There are only

three options: created agents are the originating cause of sin; God is the originating cause of sin; there is no sin. The last two are false, while the first is only mysterious. And Anselm has gone about as far as one could go to clarify and analyze this core mystery at the heart of created agency, the reflected aseity by which the rational creature is an image of God.

# 6: Creaturely Freedom and God as Creator Omnium

## THE PROBLEM

Now that we have looked at Anselm's analysis of free choice we can turn to what is probably the most difficult problem involved in his project of presenting a systematic libertarian theory of freedom within the framework of traditional, classical theism.

*[This issue has not been much discussed among contemporary philosophers of religion, probably because most of them do not accept the doctrine of simplicity and the sort of absolute omnipotence postulated by traditional, classical theism. Hugh McCann proposes a view in which*

*God is the absolute sustaining source of everything, including human choices, and argues that this is consistent with libertarian freedom, since there are no preceding, natural causes that determine one's choices. See 'Divine Sovereignty and the Freedom of the Will', *Faith and Philosophy* 12 (1995), 582–98. On Anselm's analysis, if human choices were caused by God they would be determined, as I have defined the term. They would not be done freely, and could not appropriately be praised or blamed.]*

One of the core theses of traditional, classical theism is that God is the absolute Creator of all. Everything that exists is made and constantly sustained in being by God. Nothing can exist on its own. Anselm wholeheartedly subscribes to this position. But if absolutely everything with any sort of ontological status at all is

immediately caused by God, how can the choice of the created agent come from itself? And how is it that God, if He is indeed the *Creator omnium*, is not the cause of sin? As shown in the last chapter Anselm is adamant that sin is not, and in fact could not possibly be, caused by God. But how can this be squared with the strong doctrine of omnipotence entailed by traditional, classical theism?

Moreover, the God of traditional, classical theism is absolutely simple. Anselm argues in *Proslogion* 18 that if God were composite, then He could be ‘taken apart’, at least in the intellect. But a being which is destructible, even if only in the

mind, is not ‘that than which no greater can be conceived’. But then what seem to us to be different divine attributes are ultimately just one divine act. God’s omnipotence just is His omniscience such that His knowing is His causing. My computer exists right now because God knows and causes it in a single act which encompasses His knowing and causing all that exists. Traditional, classical theism took a very different approach from much contemporary philosophy of religion which assumes that God’s knowledge is like ours in being propositional. Anselm takes it that God does know the truth value of all propositions, but more

fundamentally He knows all *things* by causing them. It is the power of His thought which makes all things to be. Thus God does not know what He does not cause. But sin happens. Surely this fact does not escape God. How, then, if He knows that people sin, is He not the cause of the sin?

Anselm embraces traditional, classical theism including the strong doctrine of divine omnipotence and simplicity and argues that it does not entail that God is the cause of sin. There are, however, two apparent entailments of traditional, classical theism which Anselm rejects. Some philosophers of religion, past and present, argue that divine sovereignty must entail that all

that happens is caused by the will of God. From ‘X happens’ it follows that ‘God’s will causes that X happen’. Anselm, as we have seen, draws a sharp distinction between what God wills and what He permits. God permits sin, but He does not will it. God fits the sin into a plan for the greater good, but He does not want it, need it, or cause it. Anselm holds that, though God causes everything which is a genuine *thing*, with ontological status, there are events in the universe which happen against the will of God, and one sort of property of things and events which God just does not cause. This is a difficult conclusion, but it is necessary if God does not will sin.

The second apparent entailment which Anselm rejects is that the creature can have no causal impact upon the Creator. One way of expressing this is in terms of actuality and potentiality. If God is perfect being, then He is pure Act. It is impossible that any sort of potentiality should exist in God, but then nothing we do could affect Him. And so, for example, it could not be the case that God ‘comes to know’ what we choose because we choose it, since that would entail that the creature ‘teaches’ God some new information. Even if God ‘learns’ atemporally, the problem is that the arrow of causation runs from the creature to God. But that is absurd.

[See, e.g., Aquinas's discussion on how God's knowledge is the cause of all things, including all 'motions of the will'. SCG 1, 50.2; 68. 1 – 8.]

Insisting that we have no impact on God fits well with the position expressed above that what God knows He also causes. Anselm, though, insists that our choices are in some ultimate way up to us. I argue in Chapter 9 that Anselm allows the conclusion that God knows what we choose *because* we choose it. Rational creatures, as primary agents, have genuine causal power and so can do things against God's will and can affect Him. The present task is to show how Anselm reconciles these radical claims with his

commitment to the position that God causes all that exists and that His omniscience and omnipotence are one. First some historical background, not only to see where Anselm builds upon or departs from earlier thinkers but also to clarify the issues involved.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: BOETHIUS AND ERIUGENA

Augustine's work was the catalyst for a great deal of bitter debate early in the Middle Ages. Both those who said that God is the absolute cause of all choices, such that He predestines the elect to heaven and the rest to damnation, and those who wanted to reserve some space in the salvation story

for participation by the human will claimed him as their inspiration. (The specific question of saving grace is discussed in the next chapter.) Augustine accepts traditional, classical theism. He holds that all that exists is caused immediately by God and nothing is known by God which is not also caused by Him. ‘However, [God] did not know all His creatures, both spiritual and corporeal, because they are, but rather they are because He knew them.’ He also accepts the apparent entailments which Anselm rejects. God is not in any way affected by His creatures, and absolutely all that happens, even the choice to sin, is willed by Him. ‘For the almighty produces in the hearts of

human beings even the movement of their will in order to do through them what he himself wills to do through them, he who absolutely cannot will anything unjust.' I have argued that Augustine, throughout his career, is a compatibilist, and compatibilism fits well with this version of traditional, classical theism.

[*Lynne Rudder Baker argues that the classical theist ought to be a compatibilist in 'Why Christians Should not be Libertarians: An Augustinian Challenge', Faith and Philosophy 20 (2003), 460-78.*]

God causes everything, but in the case of created willing He causes it through the will of the created agent, so that the created agent

does indeed choose voluntarily, inevitably pursuing the objects towards which its God-given desires draw it. This analysis does not satisfy Anselm and provides the impetus for his discussion of freedom and the causes of sin.

After Augustine, the next genuine philosopher to take up the question of free will is Boethius, who makes a real contribution towards solving the problem of how free choice can be reconciled with divine foreknowledge. I shall note in Chapter 8 that Anselm's solution to the dilemma is influenced by Boethius's doctrine of 'conditional' necessity and his expression of the relationship of the temporal world to divine eternity. Free will plays a crucial

role in Boethius's *Philosophiae Consolationis*, since the main argument which Lady Philosophy makes is that God is indeed the orderer of the universe such that all fortune can be good, if the created agent freely responds in the best way, taking what may seem evil fortune to be a lesson or a test. Boethius, however, never addresses the question of the basic workings of the will. He follows Augustine in much of his thought, and there is reason to suppose that he is, more or less consciously, a compatibilist of the Augustinian sort. Lady Philosophy describes free will as the ability to make rational judgments and pursue the desired object and reject what should be avoided. ‘Therefore

those who possess reason, also possess the freedom to will or nill' (*inest etiam volendi nolendique libertas*). Boethius does not devote much time to developing the position, but the idea that the will is free when its choices follow upon desires which follow upon reason suggests compatibilism. This interpretation would make sense of his ultimate conclusions about the relationship between divine knowledge and the actions of creatures.

Although Boethius offers a helpful expression of the important point that God's knowledge is eternal, which claim allows Anselm to reconcile divine foreknowledge with a robust, libertarian understanding of

created freedom, Boethius himself does not draw any libertarian conclusions. Instead he argues that God's knowledge is the cause of all events. He holds it to be obviously impossible that God's knowledge should follow upon events. 'But how absurd to say that the occurrence of temporal things is the cause of eternal foreknowledge! For what else is it to think that God foresees future events because they exist, then to imagine that, once they happen, *they* are the cause of His highest providence?' He goes on to say, through Lady Philosophy, that God, in His eternal present, simply knows and thereby causes all events.

For God receives his comprehension and vision of all things as present, not from the outcome of future things, but from His own simplicity. And this also solves [the problem] you posed a little while ago, that it would be unfitting if our future actions were said to furnish the cause for God's knowledge. For the power of His all-embracing knowledge, according to the present investigation, itself constitutes the measure of all things, and owes nothing to later events.

John Marenbon sees this conclusion as a repudiation of the earlier defense of free will. ‘Philosophy’s long and impressive defense of human freedom is ruined—but she seems not to have noticed. . . Philosophy has vindicated human freedom, only

to sacrifice it in the space of a couple of lines.'

[*John Marenbon, Boethius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 145. Marenbon argues that earlier in the *Consolation Boethius* had proposed the view that choice is genuinely not determined, although all the effects of volition are. Marenbon explains that Lady Philosophy espouses the Platonic idea of a pre-existing, disembodied self which is truly free, but which then falls into the prison of the causally determined body (pp. 123–4). It is not clear whether Marenbon reads Boethius as a fully-fledged libertarian. Certainly libertarianism does not seem to be a good fit with standard Platonic and Neoplatonic theories of motivation.]

Had Boethius clearly spelled out a libertarian metaphysics of free will, Lady Philosophy's concluding remarks would indeed

signal an abrupt and puzzling change in Boethius's thinking. But if, as seems likely, the Augustinian sort of compatibilism underlies Boethius's views of human freedom, then there is no contradiction between humans having (a fully determined) free will and God's knowledge causing all events. But the problem of sin remains acute.

In Western Europe the five centuries between Boethius and Anselm do indeed constitute some 'Dark Ages' from the perspective of the history of philosophy. There is one bright spot during the Carolingian Renaissance, the only philosopher worthy of the name, Johannes Scotus Eriugena working at the Carolingian court

in the mid-ninth century. His master work, the *Periphyseon*; or, *De divisione natura*, is a deep and systematic investigation of being in general, and especially of the relation of created being to the Creator. Eriugena was thoroughly versed in Augustine's work, but he was also inspired by Byzantine Christian theologians, who had remained more faithful ideologically to their non-Christian, Neoplatonic roots than had Augustine. The *Periphyseon* skates perilously close to pantheism and was held in deep suspicion during the Middle Ages.

*[I do not say that it is pantheistic. Eriugena insists on the delicate balance between God's immanence and*

*transcendence, and does not emphasize the former over the latter. Still he does say things that sound like pantheism, such as the point made in Book 1, Chapter 3, and often repeated, that God is the essence of all things.]*

Anselm, as far as we can tell, was not familiar with this most important of Eriugena's works.

*[It is difficult to prove a lack of acquaintance, but it is safe to say that Anselm's philosophical work does not contain a single idea which is more likely to have come from the Periphyseon than from Augustine. And in Monologion 8 where he discusses the possible meanings of 'creation ex nihilo' he does not mention the view that looms very large in Eriugena's work, that nihil in this context is God Himself, the Creator who transcends all circumscribed natures to such an extent that He is properly called 'nothing'].*

But Eriugena had written an earlier work, *De divina praedestinatione*, on the relationship of divine omnipotence to human free choice. We cannot be sure that Anselm had read this book, but it will be well to devote some time to it. Eriugena is the first Christian philosopher to appreciate fully the problem bequeathed to Western Christendom by Augustine and Boethius when they write that it is God's omniscience that causes all events. Eriugena's solution, that God does not know evil and sin, angered the churchmen of his day and was condemned in the ninth century by two church councils. But two and a half centuries later,

Anselm proposes a solution interestingly similar to Eriugena's. In mid-ninth century France a bitter debate over divine predestination was sparked by a peripatetic monk, Gottschalk, who taught that Augustine's position—which, given the importance of Augustine as an authority, is to say the *correct* position—on predestination is that God causally predestines the elect to heaven and the rest to hell.

[For discussions of the history of the predestination controversy see Avital Wohlman, 'Introduction to the English Translation', in Mary Brennan's translation of *De divina praedestinatione: Treatise on Divine Predestination* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), pp. xv–xxix; David Ganz, 'The Debate

*on Predestination*', in Margaret T. Gibson and Janet L. Nelson (eds.), *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom* (Hampshire, UK: Variorum, 1990), 283–302; and John Marenbon, *John Scotus and Carolingian Theology: From the De Praedestinatione, its Background and its Critics, to the Periphyseon*, also in Gibson and Nelson (eds.), *Charles the Bald*, 303–25.]

Human freedom does not play any decisive role in the process. My interpretation of Augustine fits well with Gottschalk's, but a number of important churchmen of the time were infuriated. As Augustine himself, and Boethius after him, had said in *defending* free will, if our destinies are immutably fixed in the divine will then it seems there is no point in striving for virtue since whatever

we do, we do inevitably. Moreover, there can be no question of personal merit or just blame. Hincmar, Archbishop of Reims, asked Eriugena to write a response to Gottschalk, so Eriugena wrote *De divina praedestinatione*.

Like other intellectuals of his day, he claims to be working entirely within Augustinian guidelines and he frequently cites and quotes the Master. But, unlike the other participants in the debate, being a genuine philosopher, he realizes that in order to deal with the problem at hand he has to address the underlying metaphysics involved with free will and with God's causal omniscience. He does not

start from the most basic questions and build a careful, analytic, and systematic analysis of free will as does Anselm two and a half centuries later. But he does advance the question significantly, and in a way which foreshadows Anselm's solution to the problem of freedom in the face of divine omnipotence as traditional, classical theism understood it.

Like Anselm, Eriugena never doubts that there is real sin and evil. And it is a non-negotiable truth that God does not in any way cause evil. Eriugena does not offer Anselm's argument based on the definition of sin about the logical impossibility of God's causing sin, but he takes it to be a necessary consequence of God's goodness

and simplicity that God does not cause sin, nor does He cause the punishment consequent upon sin. God gives the gift of future happiness to His chosen and merely permits the others to suffer the consequences of their sins. And Eriugena proposes a very interesting view of hell which Anselm will *not* adopt: the fires of hell and the light of heavenly beatitude are one and the same phenomenon, only felt differently by the blessed and the damned.

If God does not cause sin, where does it come from? It comes from created free will. It is especially in being free that we are made in the image of God. But how does Eriugena understand ‘free will’? Though he does not

develop a clear and systematic libertarianism as Anselm will do later, Eriugena says enough to show that he has broken with Augustinian compatibilism in favor of a libertarian approach. I do not say that he deliberately or explicitly proclaims Augustine to be mistaken. Rather, he makes every possible effort to argue that Augustine could never have taught that God causes sin. He goes so far as to insist that when Augustine *says* that God causes sin he is speaking *a contrario*, that is, he is using a sort of literary/pedagogical device of saying the opposite of what he means! Eriugena insists, as does Anselm, that if God is not the source of sin, then the created

agent must have libertarian freedom.

He sets out his views on the meaning of free will in Chapter 5 of *De divina praedestinatione*, and begins by noting that there can be no compelling cause which makes the will good or evil, for compulsion is contrary to willing. This is a point that Augustine had made, and it is entirely consistent with compatibilism. But Eriugena goes on to ask why God did not make us so that we would always choose the good. As noted in Chapter 2. Augustine argues that God could have done so without negating our free will, but chose not to for reasons we cannot fathom. In any case, the created agent has no right to complain as it

is better to exist than not, and God can find a use for the sinful creature. Eriugena's answer to the question is quite different. 'If God had established in man a will that could not move itself in every way, either rightly or perversely, then it would not have been free in every way, but free in part and not free in part. . . . So a will which can only will the good is a will of sorts, but a defective one.

Someone might suggest, Eriugena continues, that it would be better to achieve eternal happiness through a defective will, than to possess a whole will capable of sinning. But that is ridiculous, he argues. Justice means giving each his due. God rewards us for living piously, and

part of living piously is obeying God's command not to sin. But the command would be vacuous if we were not truly able to sin. He goes on to say that God gave the first man a free will so that he would be able to sin or not to sin. And he even seems to offer, as the definition of free will, that it is the power to choose between good and evil. God gave man 'free will, that is the choice for good or evil' (*liberum arbitrium, id est electionem sive boni sive mali*). Augustine emphatically rejected this definition in *Opus imperfectum contra Julianum*, and Anselm allows that free will should not be *defined* as the ability to sin or not to sin. But Anselm, whether or not he was familiar

with Eriugena's thought, agrees with the Carolingian philosopher, that in order for the created will to have morally significant freedom, it must have the genuine alternative to choose rightly or wrongly.

Sin and its consequent punishment come not from God, but from the free will of the rational creature. And why do we sin? The question is unanswerable because sin is evil, and evil has no ontological status. It is nothing and cannot be known. In explaining this Eriugena paraphrases Augustine's *De libero arbitrio*. But whereas Augustine, in other works, goes on to offer an explanation for sin as the result of the deficient cause which is the

absence of divine aid, Eriugena stops here, and thus foreshadows Anselm's last word on why the devil chose to sin—only because he chose.

In insisting that sin is real, that God does not cause it, and that its source is in the created agent who must have the option for good or evil if he is to be good, Eriugena prefigures Anselm. But what of the pressing and more fundamental problem which must be solved before we can allow the created will any autonomy in the universe of traditional, classical theism? If God is the source of all, and if all that He knows, He causes, how can one possibly argue that it is the created agent, and not God, who is the cause of

sin? Eriugena sketches an answer which angers the churchmen of his day and leads to his condemnation, but two and a half centuries later Anselm will fill in the sketch in a way which satisfied his contemporaries, and which may be the best solution traditional, classical theism has to offer.

Eriugena embraces the view that divine simplicity entails that God's predestination, that is His causing all future things, is exactly the same as His foreknowledge. Although the terms 'predestination' and 'foreknowledge' mean different things from our perspective, they in fact name the same phenomenon. God, of course, is

timeless, and so it is really better not to speak of *predestination* or foreknowledge. The entire universe is present in God's eternity, and it is all seen, known, and made by Him. If God does not cause sin or punishment, then He does not know sin or punishment. The evil of sin and punishment are not *things* at all. Following the Augustinian theory that sin and evil are simply the corruption or destruction or absence of some good, or the choice of a lesser over a greater good, Eriugena denies that sin and punishment, as evil, have any ontological status at all. God makes all things, but He does not make the ‘nothing’ of sin. It is not a thing to be made, nor is it a thing

that can be known. ‘For how could we possibly believe that God, who alone is true being, and who makes everything which exists in so far as it exists, should have foreknowledge or predestination regarding those things which are not Him, nor come from Him, because they are nothing?’

When Scripture and Authority say that God knows sin and punishment, then it must be only in the sense that we can ‘see’ darkness, meaning that we recognize the absence of the light. Or we ‘hear’ silence in that we are aware of the absence of sound. But of course, we don’t really perceive some substance, the darkness, or hear some sound, the

silence. And if they say that God Himself causes the sin and its punishment, it must be that they are speaking *a contrario*. Eriugena devotes a great deal of time to defending his use of the *a contrario* as an interpretive tool. Clearly he expected his audience to react with skepticism, and he was right.

The response was more than skeptical. It was hostile. Hincmar disavowed the *De divinapraedestinatione*, and it apparently sank into relative obscurity. The Council of Valence in 855 condemned the thesis that God does not foreknow sin and punishment. It writes that God most certainly *does* foreknow that the good will do good, through

grace, and the evil will do evil through their own malice. And it is not that the evil do evil by some necessity, as if they could not do otherwise, but God foreknows what they will do through their own wills. Moreover, God predestines the good to salvation and the evil to punishment, though He does the latter only in the sense that they do evil on their own and He justly punishes them. The Council of Langres in 859 seconded the opinion. It is not clear that the councils grasped Eriugena's argument, and they did not tackle the question of how God could foreknow sin if He does not efficaciously cause it, and so the condemnations did not further the philosophical progress

of the debate. Wohlman writes that Hincmar, wanting to put the issue behind him, ‘... composed a synodal letter which we still possess, a masterpiece of political conciliation, whose formulae are sufficiently vague to be adopted by all the protagonists in the debate as well as the faithful at large, while carefully disguising what was at issue in the debate’. The fight simmered down gradually after the mid-ninth century without any consensus being reached on the question of predestination. Indeed, it is a stunning understatement to note that the issue has continued to divide the Christian community to the present day.

Of course, it is not the business

of church councils to produce treatises on metaphysics, and, from a philosophical perspective, one can sympathize with Eriugena's critics. Invoking the Augustinian privative theory of evil, with the daring conclusion that God simply does not know sin, may ultimately prove a helpful first step to explaining how God might know and cause all things without thereby knowing and causing evil. But it hardly succeeds in solving the problem at hand. If it is true that, 'Bill will commit adultery', then traditional, classical theism entails that it is true that 'God knows that Bill will commit adultery'. But then, if God's knowledge is causal, how is it possible to deny, 'God *causes* that

Bill will commit adultery? We can couch the problem in terms of the absolute dependence of all upon God: sin is a deed, and as such it has some ontological status, and so it must be caused by God. That is, sin must lie in making a choice. In Anselm's analysis it is the choice to pursue some desired object in violation of the will of God. The object, the agent, the agent's will, the agent's desires, and even the agent's choice are all 'things' of a sort. As such they must all be known and caused by God. Perhaps, as Eriugena argued, evil *per se* is not a substance. None the less the choice to sin has enough being that it cannot simply fall outside of God's causal omniscience.

## ANSELM'S SOLUTION

Anselm, though he may not have known Eriugena's work, comes to similar conclusions regarding how to fit libertarian freedom into a traditional, classical theist framework. The evil of sin is neither caused nor known by God. But Anselm, by offering a systematic analysis of the workings of the free will, has done the metaphysical spade work necessary to make sense of this claim, which he develops with appropriate caution. He sets out the dilemma starkly in the first chapter of *De casu diaboli*. There is absolutely nothing in the universe except God and what He makes. And He is Highest Good and

Highest Being and absolutely nothing comes from Him except what has being and goodness. What are we to make of sin?

Anselm writes: 'I do not think I can deny that the will and the turning of the will are something' (*Nec voluntatem nec conversionem voluntatis puto negari posse aliquid esse*). Although the will and its choice are not properly called 'substances', none the less they ought to be recognized as 'beings' (*essentias*) of a sort. And certainly the bad will exists, as much as the good will. But the evil will itself, and its property of being evil, can be distinguished. 'Thus the evil will is not the very evil by which it does evil things, just as the good will is not the very good by which it does

good things.' (The same point can be made about the choice of the will.) The good by which the will does good is justice. The evil is injustice. But injustice is the privation of justice, and as such it is nothing. It is simply the absence of the justice which was thrown away, with nothing to take its place.

Grasping Anselm's analysis of how the will works allows us to understand his claim that all of the elements of choice which have any sort of real *being* come from God, but that the injustice is simply nothing. The situation is this: God creates the agent with the will as instrument, and bestows upon the will the two sorts of desire, for justice and for benefit. If God had

given the created agent only one sort of desire, the desire for rightness or the unbridled desire for benefit, then no conflict would arise and the desire would simply become the actual choice. But, as discussed in Chapter 4, in this hypothetical scenario, the agent chooses through the one desire given it by God and so its choice is necessary and hence not free. In order to allow created freedom, God bestows upon the created agent the two *affectiones*. Thus morally significant choice consists in a struggle within the agent, due to the conflict between the desire for the inappropriate benefit, and the desire for justice which would lead him to endorse only the appropriate desires. Preceding the

final decision there are, as it were, two streams of desire competing for ascendancy. Or, to put it another way, the agent is trying to pursue two desires, where ultimate success regarding one entails the abandonment of the other. Sin occurs when the agent ‘succeeds’ in following the desire for the inappropriate benefit.

[As I noted in Ch. 5, I take Anselm on morally significant choice and the struggle between opposing desires to prefigure in some ways Robert Kane’s ‘parallel processing’ as it is discussed in, e.g., ‘Responsibility, Luck and Chance’, *Journal of Philosophy* 96 (1999), 217–40.]

One of the two God-given desires becomes the actual choice. The agent, the will as instrument,

the motivating desires, and hence the desire which ‘wins out’ are all from God. There is no *thing* in this story which is not from God.

Anselm holds that God initially gave the created agent both the desire for justice and the desire for benefit, and so it was originally created in a condition of desiring justice, that is, it was created actually just, which entails having the power to abandon justice. Should the agent remain just, then it simply follows the desire for justice implanted by God and wills only the appropriate benefits. It does nothing but continue in the status quo. Should the agent sin, it follows to excess the desire for benefit implanted by God. In doing so it rejects the status quo

and abandons justice, but not through the introduction of some new and original desire. The created agent adds nothing to the sum of things when it sins. In the struggle between the desires for justice and for inappropriate benefit, the ultimate choice is not some third element, a really existing ‘something’ above and beyond the desires. It is either a just choice, which is simply a continuation of the harmony of the two motives for benefit and justice with which the agent was created, or else an unjust choice, that is the ‘winning out’ of the already existent desire for the wrong benefit. Nothing with any ontological status is brought into being by the created agent.

However, it is up to the agent himself whether he will maintain the just status quo, or pursue the wrong benefit.

If, as an example of a morally significant choice, it is true that ‘Bill chooses to commit adultery’, then Bill, his will, and his conflicting desires, including the inappropriate one that he ultimately follows, are from God.

*[It is not that God gives ‘bad’ desires, but rather that people pursue what are in essence good desires in an excessive or perverse way.]*

Thus there is a sense in which God is the cause of the event, as the one who created and sustains in being every *thing* in it. But it does not follow that ‘God causes that

Bill chooses to commit adultery', if that means that God moves Bill's will to choose adultery rather than not. *Bill* is the one who causes that Bill chooses to commit adultery. Had Bill chosen otherwise, God would equally have been the cause, as Creator and sustainer, of 'Bill chooses not to commit adultery'. It is up to Bill which event happens. This means it is up to Bill what God, as the source of the ontological status of all the elements involved, will cause. This last statement implies that the created agent, though it cannot bring anything new into being, none the less has some effect upon God, and this is a conclusion that many traditional, classical theists find absurd. At the end of

this section I attempt to explain and try somewhat to mitigate this difficulty with Anselm's conclusion.

In *De concordia*, where Anselm is trying to reconcile free will with grace, foreknowledge, and predestination, the problem is recast in terms of the apparent contradiction between created freedom and God's causal omniscience. The dilemma is this: if things are the cause of God's knowledge then they must exist independently of it, and so He is not their source. But we know that God's knowledge *is* the source of everything. However, if God's knowledge is the cause of the deeds of the wicked then He punishes them unjustly—which is

impossible. Anselm answers that there is a sense, as we saw above, in which God can be said to cause the deeds of the wicked. He causes all that has being in them: the agent, the will, and its conflicting desires, including the one that will ‘win out’ to be the agent’s actual choice. But God is not the cause of the wickedness. Justice really is a being. It is the standard for what is right. In fact it is ultimately God Himself. Injustice, however, is not a quality or an act or any sort of essence at all, but only the absence of the justice that ought to be there in the will. (Anselm notes that he explained all this in *De casu diaboli*.) The will and its choices are indeed existent things, and they exist equally whether they are

good or bad. So both the good will and choice and the bad will and choice are caused by God in so far as they are beings. ‘In the good things [God] causes them to exist and to be good, in the bad He certainly causes them to exist, but He does not cause them to be bad.’

So it is incorrect to say that God causes all things with *all* their properties. God causes all things, and He causes all their *positive* properties. In an unjust will or choice it is the created agent which is the source of the negative property of injustice. God’s omniscience is causal, so He knows and causes every *thing* involved in the choices of created agents. He knows *that* a choice is

unjust, in that He knows and causes the desire which the agent pursues contrary to justice, and He knows when the agent pursues it. But He is not the cause of the abandoning of justice, and the ensuing lack is not *per se* a ‘thing’ to be caused or known at all.

And so the vexed question of predestination, God’s causal activity regarding future events, can be solved. (Note that, given Anselm’s position that God is outside of time and all of time is present to God, there is not ultimately a<sup>42</sup> difference between His causing past, present, and future events. See Chapter 9.) When Scripture and Authority say that God predestines the bad and their bad deeds, it means only that

He does not move to correct them. When He is said to predestine the good and their good works, it is because He makes them to be and to be good. He does not *necessitate* their goodness, which would be impossible, but rather supplies them with all it takes to be good, including the standard for goodness, which is Himself. With the bad, He makes their essence, but not that they should be bad.

There is a sense in which whatever is foreknown and predestined happens by necessity, ‘... but these foreknown and predestined things do not happen by the sort of necessity which precedes a thing and causes it, but rather by that which follows upon

a thing (*sed ea quae rem sequitur*), as we said above'. Earlier, in discussing foreknowledge, Anselm had made the distinction between a compelling necessity and what he calls a 'consequent' necessity, i.e. the necessity which follows as a logical entailment upon the positing of some thing or event. Necessarily, if  $x$ , then  $x$ , by the law of non-contradiction. If knowledge means that the belief in question is true, then 'if A knows that  $x$ , then  $x$ ', and so  $x$  follows necessarily from 'A knows that  $x$ '. But in itself this is not the necessity of compulsion. So we can argue that if God foreknows that Bill will commit adultery, there is a sense in which it is necessary that Bill commit

adultery, but it is only the logical sense in that the necessity follows upon the positing of the fact. And, as I shall argue in Chapter 9 this understanding of the sort of necessity entailed by divine foreknowledge leaves open the possibility that it is up to the created agent, in this case Bill, that God foreknows that Bill will commit adultery. So not only is the necessity in question not one of compulsion, but it stems ultimately from a fact for which Bill is the cause. And the same with predestination. What God knows, He causes, but in the sense that He creates and sustains in being all that has ontological status. But it is up to the created agent which God-given desires

will become actual choices, and hence which ones will be ‘predestined’. ‘Although God predestines these [‘necessary’ events], He does not do so by compelling the will, or with the will resisting, but by leaving [the will] to its own power.’<sup>i</sup>

In the final section of *De concordia*, on grace, Anselm repeats his view that the will does indeed move itself. But this does not deny God’s causing all that is. ‘I say that the will as instrument causes all voluntary motion; but if we consider carefully, it is more true to say that all that the nature or the will does is caused by the One who made the nature and the instrument for willing, with its desires, without which the

instrument could do nothing. He concludes *De concordia* by insisting that the guilt for evil lies solely with the created agent, in this case man, who deserted justice when he could have kept it.

Therefore, regarding the good deeds, it belongs to God that they are good through their essence, and that they are good through their justice; in the evil deeds [it belongs to God] only that they are good through their essence, not that they are bad through the absence of the justice they ought to have, which is not a thing. It belongs to man, however, regarding the good, that they are not evil, because he did not desert justice and do evil when he was able to, but he preserved it through free will, with given and subsequent grace. But regarding the

evil [it belongs to man] that they are evil because he caused it all on his own, that is, through his unjust will.

And again, Anselm allows the entailment that our choices have an impact on God. Immediately before the conclusion quoted above he says: ‘That [God] causes the evil deeds is solely the fault of man, because He would not cause them, if man did not will to do them.’ God sustains all that is in being, which means He causes whatever has ontological status in the evil deed. But that the evil deed should occur is not caused by God, but by the human agent. And so it follows that God’s causal activity is a ‘response’ to the human choice.

Within traditional, classical

theism this is a radical consequence of Anselm's view. It suggests that God can be in some way passive relative to human activity, and it also poses a serious difficulty for the doctrine of divine simplicity. Anselm does not bring up these problems, but it seems well to say a word about them in hopes of suggesting possible solutions. To the problem of divine passivity, the Anselmian might respond that, since the entire system in which created agents can have genuine causal power is the work of God, the 'passivity' is His own doing. It is not, then, a weakness or a limitation on divine omnipotence. At the least, it does not signal a greater limitation on divine power

than the claim that God simply cannot make a creature which might have a causal impact on Him.

The conflict with the doctrine of simplicity seems a thornier question. Anselm certainly subscribes to the doctrine. All of the divine attributes are one. They are identical with one another and with God's nature. This is quite a difficult doctrine, but it only gets worse in relationship to God as Creator. Anselm, as I shall argue in Chapter 10, holds that God creates freely, and yet that He is a Creator by necessity. Thus 'Creator' is one of the attributes which is identical with the other attributes of God and with His nature. God is a necessary being,

identical with His act of Creativity, Wisdom, Justice, etc. But, on Anselm's analysis, God's act of creation includes contingency. That is, if for some of the things in the world, it is up to the free choices of created agents which things God will cause, then some of God's causal activity seems to be necessary and some seems to be contingent. And does not this distinction introduce real multiplicity in the divine act which is identical with the divine nature?

*[Aquinas faces a different, but equally difficult, problem along these lines. For Aquinas God might have created a different world or no world at all, and so it seems that there is both contingency and necessity in the divine act. One possible solution focuses on Aquinas's claim that, while creation is really related to God,*

*God is not really related to creation. See W. Matthews Grant, ‘Aquinas, Divine Simplicity, and Divine Freedom’, *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 77 (2004), 129–44. Anselm does not view the relationship of creature to Creator this way and so cannot make use of this point.]*

The problem is not that responding to created agency would require some change in God. I shall argue in Chapter 9 that Anselm adopts a four-dimensional view of time. All of time is immediately present to God and He does all that He does in one changeless act. But this act must include elements of necessity and contingency. A prime example is the Incarnation. The thesis of Anselm’s *Cur deus homo* is that, once the first humans sin,

God ‘must’ become Incarnate due to His goodness. There is necessity in that, given His goodness, He literally could not do otherwise than become Incarnate. And yet there is contingency in that the sin of the first human beings does not happen by necessity and might not have happened.

Anselm does not address the problem concerning how this element of contingency is to be incorporated into the one, perfectly simple, divine act which also includes necessity—which is, in fact, identical with God’s necessary nature. It seems to me that the Anselmian might respond along these lines: classical theists standardly hold that God knows

both Himself and contingent things. If His simplicity can encompass that sort of multiplicity in a single act of the divine intellect, then it can encompass it in a single act of the divine will—which is identical to the intellect.

*[Aquinas holds that God knows contingent things in knowing Himself (ST 1, Q. 14, art. 5), but he has still got to grant that God knows contingent things.]*

This ‘response’ is not really an explanation or a description of how the divine simplicity can entail knowing and acting upon multiplicity. It is just pointing out that, short of moving to a Plotinian or Aristotelian position where the divine really knows and

does one thing, in the most absolute sense of ‘one’, classical theism must grant that knowing and acting upon multiplicity is consistent with a God not composed of parts.

But there is an even more radical problem facing the Anselmian. The doctrine of divine simplicity holds that God’s act just is His nature. If His act involves response to human free choice, then is it not the case that in some sense human beings cause God’s nature? That seems a bizarre thing to say, and yet it seems to follow from Anselm’s premises about human freedom and the divine nature. I do not know how to solve this problem. One might bite the bullet, and allow that we

do in some sense cause God's nature, and that, however bizarre a proposal this seems, since that is how God has constructed the universe, it does not constitute a limitation on the divine nature. Alternatively, one could argue that, though God responds to human free choice in His one divine act, God's simplicity can be qualified such that the response can be distinguished from the act as it is identical with God Himself. One might, of course, just abandon the doctrine of simplicity, but it is an important pillar of traditional, classical theism, and it should not be given up until all else fails.

[See my '*Divine Simplicity*' ch. 3 of *Perfect Being Theology* (Edinburgh:

*Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 24 – 39.* This discussion of the problems generated by trying to relate a simple God to our world of multiplicity and contingency might serve as a motivation for supporting Aquinas's view that God is not really related to creation. W. Matthews Grant attempts to explain and defend the Thomist doctrine in 'Must a Cause be Really Related to its Effect? The Analogy Between Divine and Libertarian Agent Causality', *Religious Studies* 43 (2007), 1–23. See also W. Matthews Grant, 'Aquinas, Divine Simplicity, and Divine Freedom'. Many will find Aquinas's position even more problematic than the conclusions to which Anselm's premises have brought us.]

In any case, Anselm has got to allow that created agents have an effect, a contingent effect, on God. If there is sin, when there ought not to be, then there is contingency. God does not cause

the sin, but He is the sustainer of all that has being, and so the conclusion is inescapable.

## THE EVIL OF SUFFERING

In Anselm's work the evil of suffering receives short shrift, but he does have a bit to say.

*[Anselm himself does not address the question of animal suffering. I suspect he is content to follow Augustine's lead. See Ch. 10 for some discussion of this issue.]*

Like Eriugena before him, he uses the privative concept of evil to argue that, since injustice is really nothing, it is not known or caused by God. Anselm, however, does not follow Eriugena's conclusion that suffering and punishment, which are 'evils' of a sort, do not

come from God. Anselm in *De casu diaboli* 26 has his student interlocutor point out that we are terribly afraid of having these ‘evils’ visited upon us, which seems odd if evil is just nothing. What is it that we fear? Anselm responds that sometimes these evils are ‘nothing’ like blindness, but the ‘nothing’ of blindness, as well as the ‘nothing’ of injustice, can be followed by harms (*incommoda*) which are something, like sadness, for example. It is these harms which we fear. If the harm in question does have some ontological status, then it is caused by God, but there is nothing offensive to faith in saying this. He makes the same point in *De concordia* 1.7 and adds

that the harms which can be said to be caused by God serve a purpose. They test and purify the just and punish the unjust. So Anselm does not hold that it is the created agent who ‘creates’ the suffering consequent upon sin.

But certainly it is the created agent alone who produces the evil of the sin. Anselm has shown how this claim can be reconciled with the traditional, classical theist view that all that has ontological status is caused by God, and that every *thing* that God knows He causes. However, the claim simply contradicts the view that everything that happens is causally willed by God. Sin does happen, and it is not causally willed by God. And it is up to the created

agent to produce in God the knowledge of whether the agent has sinned or not, so in that small way we have an effect on God. If it is argued that this is too great an infringement upon divine sovereignty, Anselm can respond that it is one which God has imposed upon Himself in making creatures with free will. And, in any case, it is an expression of power, not of weakness, that God chooses to produce beings who, with their small measure of aseity, can be genuine images of the divine.

# 7: Grace and Free Will

## AUGUSTINE AND THE PELAGIANS

The problem Anselm confronts is this: there are very good theological reasons to toe the Augustinian line that the gratuitous intervention of God, ‘grace’, is absolutely necessary to save fallen man, and cannot possibly be merited in any way at all. Church teaching inherited by Anselm had not wavered on these two claims since Augustine’s day. But if it is grace which saves, and if it is not given in response to some free choice on the part of the created agent, then the importance of human freedom seems to be

exhausted with the story of the original Fall. The task before Anselm is to defend post-lapsarian human freedom, without falling into the error of Pelagius. A reminder of the problems with Augustinian compatibilism, and then a quick survey of Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism with their attendant difficulties, will show why it is so vital that Anselm reject both sides of the earlier debate and carve out a third way which ascribes all saving power to divine grace, but which retains a small, but decisive, causal role for created freedom.

In his controversy with the Pelagians over divine grace, Augustine spells out his view that God's will is the only ultimate

cause at work in the story of the final destiny of the human being. Fallen man is inevitably bound for damnation unless God should step in and save him, either by ‘drawing’ the will through desire, or simply by ‘turning’ it from evil to good. Grace is absolutely necessary, it is entirely unmerited, and it is irresistible. Of course Augustine is not saying that one could be saved, ‘against one’s will’, as if one might persist in choosing evil and be thrust through the Pearly Gates under protest. The elect will turn from their sinful condition because they want to, but they will want to because God determines their wills.

In Chapter 2 I argued that the late, anti-Pelagian works do not

signal a radical reassessment on Augustine's part of the relationship of the human to the divine will, but rather a clarification of the compatibilist position on free will which he had always held. Augustine's compatibilism is problematic in that, while it insists upon responsibility for the created agent, it places the *ultimate* responsibility for all human choices for good or for evil in the hands of God. Augustine is both a standard compatibilist and a theist compatibilist in that he holds that God is both the originating cause of all the temporally preceding causes that determine any choice and also the immediate cause of everything including human

choices.

On this view there is no sin in Anselm's sense of the word. For Anselm, as noted in Chapter 5, it is logically impossible for God to cause sin, since to sin is to will what God, in an unqualified way, wills that you not will. One can make sense of a concept of sin within the Augustinian framework by developing it along Calvinist lines: in God there are two wills, an explicit will through which He promulgates His commandments; and a secret will by which He causes everything that happens to happen. On this view, when a created agent sins, God, through His secret will, causes him to choose in disobedience to His explicit command. So God willing

that the created agent should disobey Him does not entail a literal contradiction.

Anselm, however, given his insistence that God is Truth, could not adopt such a view. Nor would he allow the further development of the Augustinian/Calvinist line that God, as the cause of sin, is none the less good because He causes evil to produce a greater good. Anselm says enough to enable us to discern his response to this suggestion: if God needs sin to achieve His plan, He is weak. If He could manage otherwise, but causes sin in any case, then He is not ‘good’ or ‘just’ in any way that has meaning for us.

*[This point is discussed at more length in Ch. 5, and also in my ‘Does God Cause*

*Sin?; Anselm of Canterbury versus Jonathan Edwards on Human Freedom and Divine Sovereignty', Faith and Philosophy 20 (2003), 371-8.]*

Further, as noted by the Semi-Pelagian monks in Augustine's day, as well as by a number of the ninth-century bishops confronted with Gottschalk's teaching of double predestination, there is the practical problem of human motivation. If one is convinced that all human choices and actions are caused by God for the greatest good, then there seems to be little point in struggling against one's own baser inclinations or against the evildoing of others. If one attempts to be good, that is God's work, and if one doesn't, that is

God's work, too. If evildoers are contained, that is the will of God, and if they prosper, *that* is the will of God. We don't need to *try* to conform to God's will, because, no matter what we choose, we always and everywhere *do* conform to God's will. If all the 'oughts' and admonitions of Scripture, tradition, and society fall on deaf ears, it is God who has deafened them, and for some good purpose. The practical concern that such teaching would encourage moral laziness seems a reasonable one.

Given these problems with the Augustinian position, one might suppose that the Pelagian side of the debate, church teaching notwithstanding, had in fact

gotten the better of the theological argument. But the difficulties with the views associated with the cluster of Pelagian positions are deep and many. (I shall use the term ‘Pelagian’ to refer to the whole gamut of views associated with Pelagius, certain of his contemporaries, and the somewhat later, so-called ‘Semi-Pelagians’ who wrote in response to Augustine’s anti-Pelagian works.) It would be beside the purpose of the present work to offer a history of the controversy with the various views of different thinkers, motivated by different questions, as it developed over two centuries until it was temporarily ‘settled’ at the Council of Orange in 529. I hope

to say just enough to show why Anselm, although he is clearly an original philosopher, willing to examine the roots of the issues with which he is concerned, never suggests a revival of anything like Pelagianism. Instead, he sets himself the task of defending human freedom, while accepting the most fundamental pillar of the Augustinian position: the salvation of fallen man is God's doing and depends upon a new gift of divine grace which is absolutely necessary and absolutely unmerited.

Pelagius himself disagreed with Augustine over the effects of the first sins of Adam and Eve. Augustine insisted that all humanity fell into bondage to sin

such that no one can now turn to God except by the gratuitous help, the grace, of God. Pelagius did not deny that we cannot be good without the grace of God, but by ‘grace’ he meant the natural endowments of freedom and reason, and the subsequent divine gifts such as the Law and Christ’s example, which it is within the natural ability of the human being to enjoy. Human nature was not wholly and universally damaged at the Fall. True, it may now be difficult for someone to lead a sinless life. And it is an open question whether anyone besides Christ has done so. But human nature retains its original *capacity* to live without sin. It does not need any supernatural,

transforming grace because, contrary to Augustine's view, the Fall did not universally cripple it.

The later, so-called 'Semi-Pelagians' (I use this term for want of a better, but it is widely questioned) were less willing to deny the necessity of a special, saving grace, but they could not accept Augustine's analysis which leaves nothing decisive up to the human will. For Augustine, the human will plays a central role, but it is a role determined by God. The Semi-Pelagians asked the obvious questions: how could it possibly be just that God save some and not others, if there is absolutely no difference between them? And how can heaven be viewed as any sort of reward, when, of ourselves,

we have done nothing to merit it? The Semi-Pelagians proposed, in various ways, that the human agent can initiate the process which will result in God's giving the required grace.

John Cassian, for example, suggested that, in some cases, grace would be given in response to prayer. Augustine had said such things, but had always added that the prayer itself must be the product of divine grace. Cassian allowed that the fallen human agent might *initiate* the prayer *on his own*. Faustus of Riez held that God offers grace to everyone, and then it is up to the human agent to choose on his own to accept or reject the grace. Grace is like a fountain in the middle of the

world. If someone refuses to drink, it is his own fault. But the choice to drink, which precedes the reception of the necessary grace, comes from the agent himself.

Some of the Semi-Pelagian opponents of Augustine advanced a sort of proto-Molinism; the view that God has a ‘middle knowledge’ of all possibilities, including how possible but non-actual agents would freely choose in possible but non-actual situations. These opponents accepted the necessity of baptism for salvation. But then what can be said of those who never have the option to be baptized, especially infants who die before baptism? God, these Semi-Pelagians argued,

foreknows what they would have chosen had they lived. And foreknowing that they would choose ill, He does not organize the world to produce their being baptized, as He does for those He foreknows will or would do good. So, even though the agents may die at birth, somehow the giving of divine grace follows upon their own choices.

[*Ibid.*, 46. Abelard, too, adopts this Molinist solution to the problem of infants who die before baptism; John Marenbon, *The Philosophy of Peter Abelard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 325.]

Augustine finds this view absurd. I shall argue, in the next chapter, that Anselm need not,

does not, and should not adopt Molinism. Here our concern is with grace, and the point of the embryonic Molinism in question is to reconcile the necessity of grace with divine justice by showing how grace could be given or withheld as a response to the agent's own initiating choice.

And therein lies the problem. Traditional, classical theism insists that *all* goods come from God. That is a key part of what it means for God to be omnipotent. The created agent cannot, from itself, generate any good, even the good of a good choice. The Pelagian and Semi-Pelagian views entail that the creature can be the genuine author of its own good. For example, the Pelagian Julian

of Eclanum, as his views are presented by Augustine in *Opus imperfectum contra Julianum*, describes the will as if it were balanced between choices and it is up to the created agent to tip the scales one way or another. The Semi-Pelagians mentioned above share the position that, though grace is necessary, the good choice which initiates the reception of grace precedes that grace and originates with the human agent.

Furthermore, the Christian understanding is that Christ came into the world to save sinners. What grace *is* is a participating in the saving work of Christ which effects an inner transformation, requisite because of original sin. If there is no original sin, or if we are

good enough on our own, before receiving grace, that we can initiate the process of salvation by choosing the good such that God ‘owes’ us the gifts that will get us into heaven, then we do not need Christ. Augustine criticized the Pelagians because he saw that philosophically and theologically Pelagianism undermines the Christian world view in a fundamental way.

Moreover, while Augustine’s compatibilist analysis of grace and free will posed a practical danger in terms of moral laxness, Pelagianism also posed a practical danger, though of a very different sort. In the thought of Pelagius himself, and in that of the later Semi-Pelagians, the insistence on

the primacy of human freedom was not an abstract metaphysical point, but rather a consequence of their vision of the goal of a Christian life. Pelagius called upper-class Roman lay folk to a program of personal asceticism which would aim at the perfection of the individual, such that the community of the Church would be an elite, isolated from and vastly superior to the ordinary mass of men. The Semi-Pelagians were monks from Southern Gaul who feared that Augustine's defense of the primacy of grace rendered their own efforts at self-perfection pointless. This is a fair criticism of Augustine's view, but the converse position, at least if seen in an uncharitable light,

seems a self-absorbed elitism, likely to spawn the dual sins of pride and contempt for others. Augustine consistently opposed any view that reserved heaven for those who had, by especially good behavior, carved out their own privileged status. He is certainly not an egalitarian in any absolute sense. From the divine perspective the sheep are eternally separate from the goats, and the division is made on the basis of God's will alone. But Augustine insists that we, in this life, are not privy to this divine perspective. And so in practice we are forced to assume that our fellows are essentially equal since, as far as we know, anyone we meet is a future citizen of paradise. The inwardly focused

elitism of Pelagianism is likely to strike the contemporary person as distasteful, while the Augustinian view of the practical equality of all human beings has much to appeal to modern sensibilities. Augustine's view on grace is deeply problematic, but the Pelagian alternative has its own serious difficulties both in theory and in practice. It is a strength of Anselm's harmonizing of grace and free will that, in parting company with Augustine over created freedom, he avoids Pelagianism of even the most 'Semi-' or qualified sort.

## ANSELM ON ORIGINAL SIN

To see how Anselm reconciles

created freedom with grace we need first to look at his understanding of original sin, since, in his view, what grace restores to fallen man is what was lost by the sins of our first parents. The first sins of Adam and Eve were in essence the same as the sin of the devil. By willing the inappropriate benefit they abandoned their original justice, that is they destroyed the *affectio*, the desire for rightness of will. Why say that it is the *affectio* that is lost? *De concordia* is the treatise in which Anselm deals with the problem of reconciling grace and free will, and in it he makes the distinction between the three aspects of will: the will as the instrument of willing, that is the

faculty of the soul; the will(s) as the two *affectiones*, the desires for benefit and for justice; and the will as use, the actual choice of the will. If the first sins destroyed the will for justice, ‘will’ must refer to one of these three aspects of willing. Anselm holds that we can discern which it is by pinpointing the aspect of will which the unjust person lacks that the just person possesses. Both the good and the bad have the will as instrument. Otherwise they would not be able to choose anything at all. So it is not the will as instrument that is lost at the Fall. And it cannot be the use of the will which is in question, since we recognize the distinction between the good and the bad even when they are asleep

and so not actively making choices.

But one can have an *affectio* sleeping or waking. As we saw in Chapter 3, in discussing his concept of *affectio*, Anselm was careful to argue that the desire in question is a fixed one of which the agent need not be presently conscious. For example, we have an *affectio* for health even while we are not thinking about it. The evidence that we indeed possess such a desire is that as soon as the question of health comes before our minds, we instantly, consciously desire it. Thus, what is present to the just person and missing from the unjust is the *affectio* for justice. What Adam and Eve destroyed within

themselves was the original desire for justice which God had given them in the beginning. And with the desire for justice gone, the will as instrument which remains cannot move towards its properly ordered objects, and is itself unjust.

[*De concordia* 3.13. *The desire for benefit, on the other hand, is inseparable from the will.*]

There has been some debate among scholars over whether Anselm understood this original justice to be ‘natural’ or ‘supernatural’. This explicit distinction is one which emerges after Anselm’s day, and may be the result of viewing the human being through Thomist categories that

Anselm would not have recognized. Anselm certainly believes that this original justice can be lost, without the human agent being thereby destroyed, so it is not an essential property like rationality. And if by ‘supernatural’ we mean a quality which is given immediately by the Creator in order for the created agent to achieve his supernatural end, ultimate happiness with God, then original justice is supernatural. But Anselm never suggests that there might be any other sort of justice. There is no ‘natural’ justice in Anselm’s view of things, and so it seems to import some non-Anselmian assumptions to ask whether he saw original justice as supernatural

as opposed to natural.

Anselm does not stop to explain why a single instance of choosing the wrong good should have so thoroughly killed the desire for justice within the first human beings, but the language he uses suggests that his view is similar to Augustine's. In abandoning the proper ordering of desire the soul is overwhelmed by a crowd of lusts which fill the motivational landscape such that there is no room for the desire to recapture the original rightness. The desire for justice is 'expelled'. In explaining how the evil of injustice is 'nothing' and yet so terrible, Anselm offers the analogy of the wild and dangerous beast which is allowed to rage freely due to the

lack of bonds that should have restrained it, and the ship tossed and battered by the sea because of the absence of a helmsman. In both cases the cause of the chaotic behavior is a ‘nothing’, a lack of what ought to be there. Similarly when justice is absent the will ‘throws itself and everything subject to it into all sorts of frivolous and unbridled evils . . .’ The original sins of Adam and Eve threw away the desire for rightness of will, and once the desire was gone it could not be regenerated short of divine intervention. There is no way for an agent who does not *want* justice to choose it, and so the will that has abandoned the desire is powerless to be just.

But why is it that the loss of

justice in the first people should have had such dire consequences for their progeny? *That* it did is not an issue. Someone who could look at the human condition and suppose that we're doing about as well as could be expected must have a very pessimistic view of human nature. The shared assumption of early Christian thinkers was that a good and wise God made human nature far better than it appears at present, but that something went terribly wrong at the dawn of history. Christ entered the world of space and time to undo the damage. Pelagius had minimized the consequences of the first sin, but the Augustinian view triumphed: the Fall resulted in ubiquitous and

devastating harm such that the Incarnation was not just a useful event for human salvation but rather was absolutely necessary. But how, exactly, did that first sin infect all mankind?

Ideally it would be helpful to begin with an analysis of Augustine's views on the subject, and then assess Anselm's position by comparing and contrasting. But Augustine's views are far from clear on the matter. He suggests several different modes for the transmission of original sin and there is a great deal of scholarly debate over where to place the correct emphasis. Here I can mention a few issues in Augustine where a comparison can be made which will help to illuminate

Anselm's thought, but more than that leads into such difficult territory that it is better left to experts on Augustine.

In grappling with the question of the transmission of original sin, recognizing that sin is a fault of the soul, not of the body, the question of the origin of each new soul naturally arises. As Augustine sees it, at least in his mature work, the two most plausible answers are traducianism and creationism.

*[Some scholars hold that the early Augustine accepted some form of the Neoplatonic idea that the soul exists before the body and ‘falls’ down into it. See e.g., Robert J. O’Connell, *St Augustine’s Early Theory of Man*, AD 386–391 (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1968) and *The Origin of the Soul in St**

*Augustine's Later Works* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1987). Others argue that, while Augustine was certainly familiar with this view, he never adopted it. See, e.g., Gerard O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987).]

The former holds that the soul of the new human being, like the body, originates with the procreative activities of his parents. That would explain how it could be ‘infected’ with the sin transmitted through the parents. The latter holds that God directly, and without the parents as secondary causes, creates a new soul for each new body. Augustine finds arguments and scriptural support for each side, and ultimately concludes that he

cannot solve the problem. The debate over the origin of the soul was lively in Anselm's day, and he had hoped to write a treatise setting out his own views, but died before he was able to do so. In the final analysis, Anselm's explanation for why succeeding generations are subject to original sin is consistent with either view because he does not treat original sin as a sort of positive stain or a corrupt 'something' to be handed down from parent to child, and this renders his position quite different from Augustine's.

Though Augustine's views on the transmission of original sin are complicated and difficult to assess, he does emphasize at least two explanations which Anselm

rejects. One is that human nature itself becomes radically corrupted. Augustine, remarking upon Paul's words that all men were in Adam, writes, ‘... the seminal nature already existed from which we would be propagated. And certainly, since it was corrupted on account of sin and imprisoned in the bonds of death and justly damned, man cannot be born of man in any other condition. The idea seems to be that human nature itself is radically changed by the first sins. And one key change that Augustine pinpoints is the destruction of man's free will. We are ‘free’ to sin, but the sort of freedom humanity possessed before the Fall is gone. Secondly, in Augustine's view, one clear

consequence of the Fall is the enslavement of man to his carnal lusts, especially sexual desire, such that even the sexual intercourse which is licit because of marriage involves sinful lust. Sin is transmitted from parents to children through the lust inherent in the sexual act.

In Chapter 2, in discussing Augustine's views on the causes of the first sins, I noted that he sometimes seems to ascribe to evil a sort of power, albeit the power of a vacuum. This becomes especially clear when one compares him to Anselm. Augustine allows that the nothingness of evil serves as an explanatory, though deficient, cause for sin, whereas Anselm is

clear that evil is the *result* of sin, not its cause. In arguing that the first sins change human nature and that lust operates as a causal force transmitting sin, Augustine seems again to suggest that evil has some intrinsic power. Both the manner of transmission and the way sin itself is described suggest that it is more a positive darkness than a mere absence of light. This point is reinforced in the *Enchiridion* 56, written in the early 420s, where Augustine says that he finds it likely that, in addition to original sin, the sins of our more immediate forebears add to our burden of guilt.

Anselm agrees with the basic Augustinian picture of original sin as wildly disordered desire, such

that man is at war with God, with other men, and with himself. But he sticks to the position that, ontologically, original sin consists only in a lack of justice, so he does not follow Augustine in allowing to evil any sort of power. Human nature in itself is not radically changed at the Fall. Though humanity is terribly damaged, it remains rational and free—free in the same way it was before the Fall. The definition of ‘free will’ is univocal across all its referents. Thus the fallen human being still possesses ‘the ability to keep rightness of will for its own sake’. If it were not free it could not be blameworthy, but being steeped in original sin does incur blame. Nor is sexual activity intrinsically

shameful, according to Anselm. It is entirely appropriate within the bonds of marriage, and so he does not see sexual desire as the conduit through which original sin is passed from parent to child. Perhaps most telling, he explicitly rejects Augustine's suggestion that the burden of guilt becomes heavier for the children due to the sins of their recent ancestors. Original sin, Anselm reminds us, consists in the loss of original justice. But once that justice is gone, it cannot become any *more* gone. The inherited burden of guilt is simply the absence of the justice that ought to be there, and thus is borne by everyone equally. Certainly various goods may accrue to the children of good

parents, and evils (harms) to the children of evil parents, but this is a different matter from the culpable sins for which restitution must be made.

Anselm disagrees with Augustine over one more key consequence of sin, and this may be another example of his refusal to allow to evil the sort of power which Augustine ascribes to it. Augustine argues that the original sin placed humanity under Satan's authority. Satan, with God's permission, has 'just rights' over fallen man. It is the devil's role in the Crucifixion, a great injustice, which breaks the bonds of his legitimate hold on mankind. Anselm finds it absurd that God or man should owe Satan

anything. True, man falls under Satan's power and is justly punished, but it does not follow that the devil acts from any just claim. The dual evils of the devil's fall and mankind's Fall cannot be translated into something positive; just rights for Satan. At the first human sins mankind incurred a terrible debt, the absence of the justice that ought to be there. Which justice, recall, is having one's will properly ordered to God as the ultimate standard for all value and truth. Thus it is a debt owed to God, but so enormous that only God can pay it. This is the argument of the *Cur deus homo*, and it lies outside the scope of the present work. The point here is that this disagreement

between Augustine and Anselm over the consequences of original sin underscores again the conclusion that, though Anselm follows Augustine in setting out a privative theory of evil, he is more careful than is his predecessor to insist that evil is absolutely nothing, rather than a sort of quasi-something with power of its own.

And so for Anselm the question of the transmission of original sin is not about why and how some positive stain of corruption gets passed along down the generations. Rather it is a question of why the original justice which our first parents lost for themselves is lost to their children as well. Why is it not simply

remade in their children, and in fact remade over and over in each succeeding generation for those whose parents throw it away?

*[This question may fail to capture Anselm's understanding of the difference between the relationship of all humanity to Adam and that of the later child to his parents. Anselm says that we were all 'in Adam causally or materially as in a seed' (*De conceptu* 23, S.II p. 163, ll. 2 – 3). It is not clear whether or not he takes it that the later child is 'in' the father in the same way, and so it is not clear whether or not, had Adam not sinned, a more localized lack of original justice might be brought upon children by their fathers. Anselm does make the puzzling claim in Book 1, Chapter 18 of *Cur deus homo*, that if Adam and Eve had not sinned their progeny would not be able to sin. This is a difficult text, given my interpretation of Anselm's analysis of free will. It suggests that all of mankind's freedom is somehow*

*concentrated in Adam and Eve, such that options are crucial for them, but not for the rest of us. I think it is safe to bracket discussion of this counterfactual supposition, since it does not seem to impact Anselm's analysis of the actual situation.]*

In a sense, of course, God does act to remake original justice in fallen humanity. This is what the saving work of Christ, and the grace to choose faith in that work, is all about. But why go through the rigmarole of all this divine intervention? Why not establish the natural order so that, though the parents reject justice, the children still possess it?

Anselm responds that to do so would have involved less good in the original creation of the human being. In designing the system so

that human beings would be the instruments through which more human beings are created, God gave man a great gift. The causal interdependence of the human family is a very good thing, and it is based on our reproductive natures. God gave to Adam's reproductive nature the ability to cause not only the body and soul of his child—Anselm did not get the chance to discuss just how the body comes to be ensouled, but the existence of the child as soul and body depends on the activities of its parents—but also its justice. Thus the existence and the justice of succeeding generations depends upon the free will of the original people.

The idea that a child might

inherit an *affectio* from his parents is not bizarre. It is very common for the values of parents to be passed to their children. For example, parents who value and enjoy art are likely to teach their children to do so as well. Anselm's understanding of the inheritance of justice is more than a matter of teaching, though, and so it is difficult to see just how the desire for justice was supposed to be passed from parent to child. Anselm might respond that the conceptual difficulty lies in the fact that we have only fallen man as our point of reference when we judge what is natural to his condition. And if the original justice is in some sense 'supernatural', then it would stand

to reason that the mechanism established by God for its transmission—a mechanism now lost in any case—would fall outside of human experience. So it would be unfair to criticize Anselm's theory either as intrinsically implausible or as not empirically supported by the social sciences.

Again, Anselm sees this reproductive system through which the child receives being and justice, not just from God but also from his parents, as a wonderful gift from God to man. The danger inherent in the gift is that, if the parent destroys his own justice, he cannot retrieve it on his own, and he does not have it to pass on to his offspring. The child is still

human. He is rational and free, in that he has the *ability* to preserve justice. What he is missing is the justice itself to preserve. (We shall unpack this claim below.) Being human the child still owes justice to God, but justice can be restored only through grace.

Baptized infants who die before reaching the age of reason are saved through grace alone without any input from their own free wills. On the troubling issue of infants who die before being baptized Anselm follows Augustine in the view that they are damned. He is clearly unhappy with this conclusion, noting that in thinking about this question we must set aside our inclinations, which often mislead our

reasoning, and consider only the issue of pure justice. He reminds us that our ordinary understanding of what justice in society requires can be invoked to support this conclusion. For example, suppose a wealthy benefactor gratuitously bestows vast riches upon a couple on the understanding that it is up to them to steward their resources responsibly and so pass them along to their children. And suppose that the couple willfully squander their wealth on high living and impoverish themselves. We can agree that it is bad luck for the children, but we do not think that the wealthy benefactor, society, or anyone owes the children the vast wealth their parents threw away.

[*De conceptu* 28. Anselm's example includes the parents being forced to sell themselves into servitude. I omit that aspect in an effort to make it more intuitively appealing to contemporary readers. I do not think it can be argued that the example offers a very close analogy. For one thing, most of us probably judge that society does owe the children, and all children, enough to at least subsist, whatever their parents have done. Also, it seems relevant that with an earthly benefactor resources are finite, whereas with God we have a 'benefactor' with infinite resources. Why not share some more? And the difference between hell and poverty is so vast that the comparison does not seem effective. In Anselm's favor, it is pretty clear that he is trying to make the best of what he feels, if not judges, to be a bad situation.]

Moreover he argues that it is reasonable to suppose that the

unbaptized infant, who has not had the chance to commit any personal sins, will suffer far less than the person who dies having chosen to sin on his own. None the less he thinks the logic of the situation is inevitable; original sin is damning and ubiquitous and can only be overcome by the work of Christ, through grace which, in the case of infants, means baptism.

*[De conceptu 23. In reading Anselm on this issue, one feels sure that he would be relieved to bear that the authority of the Church in which he placed more trust than in his own reasoning has come to hold that: ‘As regards children who have died without Baptism, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as she does in her funeral rites for them. Indeed, the great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved, and*

*Jesus' tenderness toward children... allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism'; Catechism of the Catholic Church (New Hope, KY: Urbi et Orbi Communications, 1994), Section 1261.]*

## GRACE AND FREE WILL

Our concern here is with the created agent who has achieved the age of reason, since Anselm's main goal is to reconcile necessary and unmerited grace with the sort of robust, libertarian free will which can ground morally significant choice and moral responsibility. Anselm accepts the importance and indeed primacy of divine grace. In fact, most of the story of human salvation, as Anselm sees it, lies in the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and

Resurrection of Christ. Anselm tells his version of this story in the *Cur deus homo*, where his stated goal is to prove, by ‘necessary reasons’ and setting Scripture aside, that God had to become man to repay man’s debt incurred by sin.

[In this Anselm proves himself to be, among Christian philosophers, perhaps the most optimistic in history regarding the abilities of human reason. Some scholars have argued that he cannot really intend to try to prove the necessity of the Incarnation, but his claims in the text are pretty clear. In the last chapter of *Cur deus homo* his interlocutor remarks that the proof Anselm has given ought to satisfy ‘the Jews and the pagans [i.e. Muslims]’. Whether or not Anselm succeeds in giving ‘necessary reasons’, that certainly seems to be his aim.]

But the fact of the Incarnation does not entirely complete the story of man's salvation because human beings must choose to recognize and embrace Christ's work as the means of their salvation. And that is where free will comes in.

One might suppose that Anselm ought to conclude that if he has indeed *proven* the Incarnation, anyone who understood the proof would have to accept it and there would be no free choice involved. But every academic knows that offering a 'conclusive' proof for some point does not necessitate that one's colleagues and students will accept it. More importantly, when it comes to the relationship between the creature and the

Creator, Anselm draws a distinction between simply believing a proposition about God and believing *in* God, where the latter involves love of God and is the point of human existence. Given Anselm's insistence that only desire can motivate a choice, it is possible to imagine someone convinced by the *Cur deus homo* argument, who believes that God became man to redress the wrong done through original sin and to effect the salvation of mankind, but who has no interest in committing himself to that belief in the sense of wanting and choosing to align himself with the work of Christ.

Without the *desire* to associate oneself with God and His work,

mere belief is dead faith. But what was lost to mankind at the first sins is precisely this desire, the *affectio* for justice, that is the second order desire that one's first order desires should be appropriate to one's nature and hence conform to the divine standard of rightness. And so for divine grace to prove efficacious, it must involve even more than the already overwhelming gift of Christ. It must involve the restoration of that will for justice. Clearly the restoration cannot be achieved, or even begun, by man for himself. We would have to *want* the will for justice in order to make any choice in that direction. But wanting the will for justice is itself the will for justice, and that is

precisely what fallen man does not have. Thus even the most qualified Semi-Pelagianism is ruled out. It is divine grace, and grace alone, that restores the lost *affectio* for justice to the will of the fallen human agent.

If the Incarnation is a gratuitous gift of God to man, and if only divine grace can restore the *affectio* for justice which enables us to participate in that gift, what role does free choice play? A first try at reconciling grace and free will might go like this: God gives the grace without which we are not saved, but it is up to the human being to maintain it. This is what Anselm ultimately concludes, but we must unpack the claim carefully. At first glance

it could lend itself to a Semi-Pelagian interpretation along the lines of Faustus of Riez: grace is the flowing fountain from which we can choose to drink. But then that choice to accept grace is the originating good which begins the process of salvation, and it is made prior to the reception of grace. The fallen agent has brought forth out of himself, unaided by grace, the good that will lead to his salvation. Anselm does not read the interplay between freedom and grace this way.

Recently Eleonore Stump has suggested an ‘Augustinian’ reconciliation of grace and free will which aims to allow a genuine role to the human agent, but

which attempts to avoid the consequence that the agent makes a decisive free choice for the good on his own. She notes that it is not a view which she finds in Augustine, but she sees it as consistent with his basic analysis. Her suggestion is that the created will may choose to prepare the way for the reception of grace by achieving a state of ‘quiescence’. That is, the fallen will is generally drawn towards evil, towards self-centeredness, and a lust for the lesser and lower. It cannot simply turn from its infatuation with these inappropriate objects back towards God and the good. And while it is absorbed in choosing wrongly it is not open to the working of grace. But there is a

third option between choosing well and choosing ill. Although the fallen will cannot turn to the good on its own, it can turn from the evil to achieve a sort of stasis. It has not chosen the good, but it is not actively engaged in choosing the evil. It is not choosing anything at all. And it is in this condition of quiescence that grace can take hold in the will. And so the created agent does have a decisive role to play in his own salvation, although grace is absolutely necessary and it is not given as a reward for any originating *good* choice on the part of the fallen human being. Stan Tyvoll argues that Anselm's reconciliation of grace and free will is best seen as a version of this

‘quiescence’ approach.

There is good reason to reject this proposal as an interpretation of Anselm. First, Anselm’s text does not support it.

*[Tyvoll, ‘Anselmian-Quiescence’, 51, suggests that we understand Anselm’s concept of ‘not sinning when able to sin’ as a state of quiescence. But in all the texts where Anselm describes this state of affairs, the will is motivated by justice and benefit, and the ‘not sinning’ is the success of the desire for justice over the desire for an inappropriate benefit. It is not a condition of not willing anything at all.]*

Further, it does not fit well with his basic analysis of how the will works. Anselm is very clear that the will is moved only towards what the agent judges to be beneficial, though there is the

option to choose justly by limiting oneself to the benefits which one ought to will, or unjustly by choosing inappropriate benefits. But without a motive there is no choice. Stump's suggestion may be—though it is not perfectly clear—that the will can *choose* to stop willing evil, and move itself to a state of quiescence instead. But this state of quiescence must be judged to be a positive benefit or not. Stump's proposal seems to be that it is not a positive benefit, but rather is simply a not-willing. But if the stasis in question is just a sort of non-position, a ‘nothing’, then on Anselm's understanding it cannot motivate. This is Augustine's view as well, and seems an intrinsically plausible

position.

[*Stump proposes various scenarios in which one might, either voluntarily or involuntarily, find one's will in a state of quiescence on some issue; Aquinas, 396-400. Presumably, if the point is to allot the free will a decisive role in the story of an individual's salvation, then there must be a choice for quiescence. But then there must be some motivation for the choice.]*

If this state of quiescence is judged to be a positive benefit, then it is something. But Anselm and traditional, classical theism in general, hold that all that has being is good in that it exists. And it can hardly be an inappropriate good since, on Stump's analysis, the condition of quiescence is vastly superior to the condition of

willing sin and rejecting grace, since it clears a way for the reception of saving grace. But then the will of the created agent has chosen good on its own, and initiated the process of salvation.

[*Stump writes that the quiescent situation might be better than that of actively rejecting grace, and yet still not good. ‘One thing can be better than another and yet not be good’; Aquinas, 402. Strictly speaking, for Anselm and Aquinas, that is false. All that is is good. Moreover, in this particular case, where the situation of quiescence is what allows for the acceptance of grace, it is hard to see how it can be anything other than a good state to be in. Not as good as already accepting grace, but good none the less. So a choice for quiescence seems a good choice. But perhaps it is not really a ‘choice’ at all. Stump says that: ‘... since the lapsing into quiescence is not an act of will at all, it can hardly be considered a*

*good act*' (*ibid.*). But this is quite a puzzling claim since she consistently describes the movement from the state of rejecting grace to the state of quiescence as something done by the agent. The agent, '*... is herself still ultimately in control of the state of her own will. That is because it is up to her either to refuse grace or to fail to refuse grace.*' She writes of an agent moving into a quiescent state: '*In ceasing to refuse grace, he brings himself into a quiescent condition to which God responds ...*' (*ibid.*). If the motion is '*up to*' the agent *in such a way as to allow him to be responsible for it, it must be a choice.* If the motion is not a choice, that is, if it is not by an act of the free will that the agent finds his will moved to a state of quiescence, then it is difficult to see how Stump's proposal is intended to offer a reconciliation between grace and free will.]

We are back with Pelagianism. It is safe to say that Anselm did not,

and given his basic premises, should not, endorse the quiescence suggestion.

In Question 3 of *De concordia* Anselm sets out to ‘harmonize’ grace and free will, accepting the Augustinian premises that grace is necessary and unmerited, and eschewing the slightest hint of the Pelagian position that the created agent, by some choice of his own, can initiate the process of his salvation. Anselm begins by noting, as had Augustine before him, that a thorough reading of Scripture motivates the task. One set of texts can be invoked to argue that human salvation depends on grace alone, while another set seems to place man’s will in charge of his destiny. Since

the entire Scripture is the inerrant Word it must be possible to reconcile the apparently contrary writings. Augustine, drawing on his underlying compatibilism, effects the reconciliation by holding that the human will voluntarily and responsibly chooses to turn from wickedness back towards God, but that the choice is causally determined, one way or another, by divine grace. For the compatibilist there is no ultimate tension between free will and causal determinism. Anselm, as a libertarian, must effect the reconciliation along other lines.

He insists that fallen man is still free, according to his definition of freedom. Freedom of will is ‘the power to keep justice’ and ‘justice’

is ‘rightness of will kept for its own sake’. In one sense, we do have the *ability* to keep justice, the problem is that we have lost the justice itself. He offers an analogy with vision. I may not be able to see a mountain at the moment, but it does not follow that I do not have the intrinsic ability to see a mountain. We must distinguish between the faculty of sight, the actual use of that faculty, and other phenomena that enable the effective use of the faculty. Suppose that my vision works very well, but that there is no mountain there to see. Or perhaps my vision works well, there is a mountain present, but it is dark. In terms of the health of my sense apparatus, I am able to see a mountain,

although I cannot see it at the moment for one reason or another. So with free will and justice. The will as the instrument of willing has not been destroyed. Nor has the power of reason which would enable one to recognize some benefits as appropriate and others as inappropriate, if one were interested in investigating the question. What is gone is the desire to keep rightness of will for its own sake. As soon as the desire is recovered, the will as instrument moves to follow it, which proves that the intrinsic power was always there, even if the motive required to exercise it was lacking.

*[De libertate arbitrii 3–4. Jasper Hopkins (Companion, 155–6) holds that*

*Anselm's argument here does not make sense because it depends upon an illegitimate hypostatization of 'rightness of will'. Hopkins writes that, 'The presence of uprightness in the will is nothing more or nothing less than the will's continually willing uprightly. . . The statement that the will could keep uprightness were it available amounts to saying that the will could will uprightly if it could will uprightly (though it cannot).' This misunderstanding on Hopkins's part arises from his failure to see that the 'will for uprightness' in question is the *affectio* for justice, a point which Anselm does not really clarify until *De concordia.*]*

Thus, the key work of divine grace is to restore justice, the *affectio* for rightness in the fallen soul. But in order for a created agent to have the power to keep justice, recall from Chapter 4, he must exercise the ability on his

own, and not just as the instrument of God's power working through him. God's restoring justice to the fallen creature entails that it now desires to keep rightness of will for its own sake. But the created agent is actually keeping the justice only if it is able to throw it away. As Anselm explains in *De casu diaboli*, 'to cause' can be said in many ways. We may be said to cause or to do something when we could fail to cause or do it, but we do not. We keep justice by not throwing it away when we could. Nothing in this scenario violates the fundamental claim of traditional, classical theism that all that is is good and comes from God. As explained in Chapter 6,

none of the elements of choice originate with the created agent. In morally significant choice, as in the choice to keep or abandon the justice restored by grace, it is indeed up to the creature that one desire wins out over the other, but the ‘winning out’ is not some new existent thing added to the process of choice.

It is up to human free will to keep the justice which grace has restored to it. Grace imbues the agent with the desire for rightness, but, just as in the original condition, the human being can ‘expel’ the desire by willing something else more. And thus, ‘... neither grace alone nor free will alone effects the salvation of man’. Anselm offers an analogy:

suppose someone is nude and cannot get any clothes on his own. A benefactor who owes him nothing gives him not only the clothes, but also the ability to keep the clothes. We would rightly conclude that the cause of the person's being clothed is the benefactor. But the person could throw the clothes away and return to his former nudity. But then we would judge that the nudity is entirely the fault of the one who threw the clothes away. Similarly with grace.

*[De concordia 3.5. In the same chapter Anselm offers the analogy of mother and father who are both needed to produce offspring as similar to the dual necessity of grace and free will for salvation. Another analogy which Anselm uses to similar effect is the farmer and the seed. Without*

*the seed (like grace) there can be no growth at all, but none the less the farmer (like free will) has to work unceasingly to nurture the seed (De concordia 3.6).]*

All the causal power to produce a new good, in this case the *affectio* for justice in a fallen will, belongs to God. And thus the credit for the salvation of the elect must go to divine grace. But Anselm insists that man can reject grace. And he does not add any Augustinian qualifications such as that man can reject grace if God does not give him the further grace required to persevere. Anselm's claim is that God gives fallen humanity the grace that is necessary for salvation, and we can choose, on our own, to keep it or to throw it away. Since all the

requirements for salvation come from God, the scope for the causal power of the created free will is small, and yet it is decisive.

Anselm has offered a successful reconciliation of grace and free will, avoiding both the difficulties with Augustine's compatibilism and those with Pelagianism. Created freedom has a genuine role to play in the salvation of the individual, but it is not one which infringes upon divine omnipotence as traditional, classical theism understands it, or which renders Christ's work unnecessary, or which allows the agent to judge himself superior to the mass of mankind. The best the fallen human being imbued with grace can say for himself is that

perhaps he is managing to refrain from being so stupid and so wicked as to throw away the entirely unmerited divine gift of grace.

*[Later in the history of the debate over grace and free will the questions arose of whether or not one could experience grace in oneself and recognize with certainty that one is saved. Anselm does not really address these issues. Clearly he holds that receiving grace initially does not, ipso facto, entail salvation, since grace can be rejected. The Catholic Church today holds that grace, as a supernatural gift, cannot itself be experienced, but that its effects can be, and perhaps this would be Anselm's conclusion had he studied the question. The actual giving of the affectio for justice would be the grace itself, and perhaps, as an act of God, would fall outside the range of human experience. The presence of the affectio in*

*the will would be the effect, and would presumably be something one could notice in oneself.]*

But there is another criticism of Augustine's views on grace which we have not touched on yet. It is one to which Anselm, too, is subject. I shall argue, though, that the problem is ineradicable in Augustine's theory, while it can be solved within Anselm's analysis of free will without structural damage to his system as a whole. Part of the Semi-Pelagians' difficulties with Augustine lie in the fact that he holds that God does not will that all should be saved, and He offers saving grace to some and not to others without any difference in merit on their part. These conclusions follow

inevitably from four premises on which Augustine will not negotiate. First, grace is necessary. Second, it is unmerited. Third, it is irresistible—the elect voluntarily choose the good in a way which is causally determined by God. Fourth, not all are saved—Scripture and Church tradition make it clear that hell is not empty. Given these four premises the conclusion that God does not will that all should be saved is unavoidable. Augustine is forced to conclude that if God chose to save everyone, everyone would in fact be saved, and without any infringement on their (compatibilist) freedom. If not all are saved, that can only be because God chooses that some should be

damned.

Of course it is true that God does not owe anything to any of His creatures. Still, it is hard to reconcile God's love with this picture of the cosmos in which some are eternally damned only because He did not choose to save them. And it is hard to reconcile God's justice, which Augustine always insists upon, with his equally adamant claim that God's choice between the elect and the damned has nothing at all to do with any difference between them. Anselm follows Augustine in the view that grace is both necessary and unmerited. In *De concordia* he also follows Augustine in the problematic claim that God extends grace to some and not to

others. He makes the point in one quick line, citing Scripture, without any attempt to defend or even explain it.

Earlier, in the *Proslogion*, in discussing how God can be said to have pity, though He is impassible, and also to have a justice consistent with punishing some of the evil and pardoning others, he admits that the question of why God should pardon some through His mercy and punish others through His justice is beyond human reasoning.

*[Proslogion 11. If this chapter were all one had to go on regarding Anselm's views on grace and free will, one might suppose that he does not ascribe any efficacy to free will, since he speaks here only about God saving and damning. It is possible that he changed his mind somewhat between*

writing the *Proslogion* and the much later *De concordia*. It is more likely, though, given that as a rule his opinions remain consistent from his early to his later work, that he makes no mention of free will in the earlier work only because it is not relevant to the topic at hand, which is the attributes of God.]

Coming from Anselm this is a rather striking admission, given that otherwise he is extremely (some would say ‘overly’) optimistic about the ability of human reason to investigate the deepest mysteries connected with the nature of the divine and the relationship of the creature to the Creator. In *De concordia*, the treatise in which one would expect him to expand on the question, he has even less to say than in the *Proslogion* regarding the troubling

issue of the apparent arbitrariness of the divine choice regarding the offering of grace.

It may be that Anselm holds that God does not offer grace to everyone because he understands that position to accord with Augustine and with the tradition of the Church, and perhaps also with the observable state of affairs in the world. Augustine's system forced the earlier thinker to the conclusion that God chooses not to offer grace to everyone and indeed, that God simply does not want all to be saved. This position is entailed by his four premises: grace is necessary; it is unmerited; it is irresistible; and not all are saved. But Anselm's analysis of the reconciliation of freedom and

grace denies the irresistibility of grace. This means that he can accept, as a matter of scriptural evidence and Church tradition, that not all are in fact saved, without being forced to the conclusion that God does not want all to be saved, and that He does not extend the grace to everyone. Anselm insists that the created agent can reject grace, and so he could have said that God does indeed give it to everyone in the form of the restored *affectio* for justice. Then the explanation for the fact that some are damned would be that they have, themselves, chosen against their desire for justice and so chosen to reject saving grace.

Given Anselm's overall system,

the proposal that God offers grace to everyone is a better move, as I shall argue below, than saying that God offers grace to some and not to others. Why does he not make it? It would mean another break with Augustine, but Anselm is willing to depart from the Master on a number of issues ranging from the rights of the devil, to the metaphysics of free will. Certainly, there are many scriptural texts to support the claim that God does not offer grace to everyone, but as with the whole issue of grace and free will, other texts can be cited to show that God does want all to be saved and does offer grace to everyone.

*[There are texts that seem to say that God wants everyone to be saved, and even*

*texts which imply that everyone is saved. See, e.g., Mt 18: 14; Jn 12: 32; Rm 5: 18.]*

One powerful reason that Anselm may have concluded that God does not offer grace to everyone is his view that the main avenue for God's giving grace is through baptism as a consequence of hearing the preaching of the Word. Clearly not all have been within earshot. Anselm may have concluded that the evident fact is that God does not extend grace to everyone.

Some of the sixth-century Semi-Pelagians had argued that God does extend grace to everyone, and the idea may have been 'in the air' in Anselm's day. Peter Abelard, a younger contemporary of Anselm's,

proposed a reconciliation of grace and free will which incorporated a universal offer of divine grace. But Abelard repeated the Semi-Pelagian view that God offers grace to everyone, and it is up to the free individual, before having received grace, to choose to accept it or not.

[*John Marenbon, The Philosophy of Peter Abelard*, 325–7; *Thomas Williams, ‘Sin, Grace, and Redemption’*, in Jeffrey E. Brower and Kevin Guilfoy (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Abelard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 258–78, see pp. 272–3. Williams writes that Abelard does not want to ‘lapse into blatant Pelagianism’, and seems to acquit Abelard of the charge. But if Abelard’s position is that it is indeed up to the fallen agent, before receiving grace, to initiate the choice to embrace the divinely proffered

*grace, then Abelard has not succeeded in avoiding the problem of Pelagianism.]*

Perhaps Anselm understands the theory that God offers grace to everyone as somehow inextricably linked to Pelagianism. But there is no necessary connection. Anselm's analysis of how God returns the *affectio* for justice allows him to say that the fallen agent does not initiate anything about the process. The freedom of the fallen agent who has received justice consists only in being able to root out and destroy the desire for justice which grace has restored. The proposal that God might give grace to everyone does not conflict with this position at all. We do not know why Anselm does not

accept, or even entertain, the idea that God extends saving grace to everyone. He does not tell us.

[*The Roman Catholic Church today continues to reject Pelagianism. ‘No one can merit the initial grace which is at the origin of conversion’; Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994), Section 2027. But it accepts the view that God offers grace to all. Papal encyclicals of the mid-1960s express the view that God can and does offer ‘... to all the possibility of being made partakers, in a way known to God, of the Paschal mystery’; Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994), Section 1260; Gaudium et spes 22.5; cf. Lumen gentium 16; Ad gentes 7.]*

None the less, considered in the ahistorical context of the reasoned attempt to reconcile grace and a robust, libertarian, free will, Anselm would have done better to

hold that God offers grace to everyone.

This move has the dual advantage of preserving the importance of free will in fallen man in general, and of circumventing the problem of divine arbitrariness and lack of beneficence. Anselm argues that after the Fall, even though we do not have the justice to keep, we are free in that we have the *ability* to keep it. But given the importance he ascribes to aseity on the part of the free agent, a critic might find it difficult to accept Anselm's analysis and still judge fallen man, without grace, free in the robust sense which grounds moral responsibility. As fallen, and without grace, we are inevitably

drawn by our unbridled desire for benefit, so how is the unjust choice truly *sponte*, that is, from oneself? Anselm holds that this terrible weakness of the fallen will is humanity's own doing, and so the fallen individual is blameworthy. His argument seems to be that we were all in Adam 'causally or materially as in a seed'. Thus, if Adam *sponte* and from himself rejects justice, then humanity as a whole can be said to have rejected justice from itself, and then each individual human being should be held responsible as if it threw away justice on its own. But the critic might complain that this concept of a sort of racial responsibility which is borne by each individual

depends on a mistaken view of the relationship of the individual to the human family.

This idea of a sort of family unity of all humanity, which Augustine proposed, looms large in Anselm's thought. Not only does his analysis of individual responsibility for original sin depend on it, but it underlies his argument in *Cur deus homo* that the God-man can pay the debt of sin for all of us. It is not a view in accordance with the tenor of much modern thought, which sees humankind as a collection of discrete, atomic individuals, not naturally bound by anything. Perhaps a careful analysis and assessment of Anselm's underlying assumptions

concerning the relationship of the individual to the human family might render them defensible, but it would be a lengthy undertaking and outside the scope of the present work. Here suffice it to say that, had Anselm parted company with Augustine, and proposed that God offers grace to everyone, he might avoid the criticism that if the fallen human being can will only unjustly, then he is not personally free in a sense robust enough to ground moral responsibility.

Still recognizing the tragic effects of original sin, Anselm could embrace the view that God offers grace to everyone, and conclude that God restores to all fallen men the ‘fullness’ of

freedom, as it were, which includes genuine aseity. Without denying any of the premises constitutive of his views on freedom and grace, he could have said that all human beings, through God's gratuitous gift, reacquire the *affectio* for justice which entails the open options which Anselm believes are requisite for created choice to be truly *sponete* and *a se*. And then for all those who are not saved, the ultimate causal responsibility would not lie with God for failing to restore justice, nor with Adam for throwing justice away for his children, but with the individual agent. This seems to accord well with his analysis of freedom in *De libertate arbitrii* and *De casu*

*diaboli.*

Finally, if God does not offer the necessary and unmerited grace to everyone, then it is hard not to see God's love as severely limited, and His will as arbitrary. On the hypothesis that He does offer grace to everyone these problems do not arise. God does indeed will that all should be saved, and He takes steps to achieve that end. As a matter of fact, not all are saved, but that is the fault of the free human will, which is intrinsically a great good. The fault cannot be even partially attributed to God's withholding His grace.

This view does entail the difficult conclusion that the human agent can thwart the will of God, but Anselm has already

faced and consciously accepted that consequence. If God extends grace because He wants an individual to be saved, and if grace can be rejected, and the rejection is genuinely up to the fallen will, then God's desire for the salvation of that person is not fulfilled. More fundamentally, as explained in Chapter 5, Anselm's very definition of sin entails that the human agent can act against the will of God. There are only two options: either God controls all created choices; or He leaves us free to originate some choices on our own. Anselm chooses the second option. His reconciliation of grace and free will insists upon a genuinely decisive role for created freedom, and the proposal

that God offers grace to everyone squares better with his overall views on freedom. Anselm does not make this move, but there is no philosophical or theological reason why the contemporary theist of an Anselmian bent should reject the thesis that God offers grace to everyone.

# 8: Foreknowledge, Freedom, and Eternity: Part I The Problem and Historical Background

## THE PROBLEM, AND TWO CURRENT SOLUTIONS

The problem of reconciling divine foreknowledge with human freedom is perennial in the history of philosophy of religion and is much debated today. Augustine expresses the problem in his famous treatment in *De libero arbitrio*: if God knows what I shall do tomorrow, given that God's knowledge is infallible, I cannot

do otherwise than as God foreknows, and so it is a matter of necessity that I do what God foreknows I shall do. But something done by necessity is not done freely. And so my choices cannot be free if they are all foreknown by God. There are numerous contemporary restatements of the problem, along more or less the same lines. Anselm is the first philosopher to propose what may be the best reconciliation of libertarian freedom with divine foreknowledge in a traditional, classical theist universe, but his solution has been misunderstood by contemporary philosophers of religion. Anselm's solution rests on three premises:

- (1) the sort of ‘necessity’ which follows upon divine foreknowledge need not conflict in any way at all with the most robust libertarian freedom because
- (2) God is eternal and
- (3) time is essentially tenseless.

There has been a great deal of debate recently over whether the concept of divine eternity is coherent and, if so, how it is to be understood.

*[Among the most important recent contributions are: Paul Helm, *Eternal God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, ‘Eternity’, *The Journal of Philosophy* 78 (1981), 429–58; and Brian Leftow, *Time and Eternity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991). Helm’s position seems to be closest to Anselm’s in that*

*Helm apparently accepts the tenseless view of time. Both Stump/Kretzmann and Leftow differ from Anselm in that their theories suggest that God's eternal viewpoint is simply one among many perspectives. Anselm holds instead that God's eternal knowledge is the direct causal source of all that is not God. And they do not clearly embrace the tenseless view of time which is entailed by Anselm's understanding of God's eternal knowing and causing.]*

Many philosophers are willing to grant that the notion of a timeless being, though difficult, is not inconceivable. And they will even grant that such a being might, without incoherence, be understood to interact with the temporal world. But many argue that such a being must still be woefully lacking in the sort of power and knowledge we attribute

to God, since, being timeless itself, it could not know what time it is *now*.

[*William Hasker, for example, argues that sense can be made of the notion that God is timeless, but that it is well to reject the view as it does not permit Him to know us, His creatures, in our individual and temporal distinctness; God, Time, and Knowledge* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 144-85.]

One way to escape this difficulty, without abandoning the view that God is eternal, is to embrace the tenseless, or ‘four-dimensionalist’, theory of time. I shall use the term ‘four-dimensionalist’ since it seems most appropriate to Anselm’s position. Anselm, as I argue in Chapter 9, expresses

divine eternity as a sort of fifth dimension, containing all of three-dimensional space, and also all times ‘at once’. The four-dimensionalist theory holds that all times are equally real. There is no absolute present, no ontologically privileged *now*. Many contemporary philosophers of religion consider this claim too foreign to experience and so reject it.

*[Hasker sees that adopting the tenseless view does solve some of the puzzles about the relationship of God to the spatio-temporal world, but he holds that it conflicts too radically with our experience of things; ‘The Absence of a Timeless God’, in Gregory E. Ganssle and David M. Woodruff (eds.), *God and Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 182-206. To my knowledge, Paul Helm is*

*the only contemporary philosopher of religion to embrace the tenseless view of time along with divine eternity, but he argues that God's eternal omniscience is incompatible with libertarian freedom (Eternal God).]*

And many hold that the eternalist solution to the dilemma of freedom and divine foreknowledge fails. If the claim that God has infallible beliefs in a fixed past generates the difficulty, then, it is argued, the proposal that God has infallible beliefs in an equally fixed eternity cannot solve it.

*[Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, 'Recent Work on Divine Foreknowledge and Free Will', in Robert Kane (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 45-64, see*

In this chapter I shall set the historical stage by looking at the work of Augustine and Boethius on divine foreknowledge and also on divine eternity in order better to understand Anselm's view and appreciate its originality. First, though, it will be useful to look quickly at two popular contemporary solutions to the foreknowledge dilemma. These contemporary views conflict with traditional, classical theism, and a brief look at them helps, by contrast, to bring into focus the philosophical motives of the tradition which Anselm shares with Augustine and Boethius. Also, Anselm's solution to the foreknowledge dilemma avoids

problems found in these contemporary positions, and so a glance at them provides a basis for comparison in appreciating the strength of Anselm's position.

Among contemporary philosophers of religion the debate over free will and divine foreknowledge is largely a dialogue between the Open Theists and the Molinists. The Open Theists take it that human beings have libertarian freedom. They see the core of libertarian freedom to be the real possibility to choose between open options. Were God to foreknow what an agent would choose in the future, the Open Theist argues, the action is 'fixed' beforehand and the agent does not face genuinely open

options. So libertarian freedom cannot be reconciled with divine foreknowledge. They conclude that God does not know future free choices. And they admit that this position has broad and radical consequences both in theory and in practice. For example, it follows from the claim that God does not know the future that His advice to us on how to prepare for it might not be correct.

*[David Basinger gives the example of someone praying about what course of study to pursue in college. Basinger explains that God's advice, while the best you're likely to get, might none the less not be good, since He does not know what the economic situation will be like five years hence. David Basinger, 'Practical Implications', in C. H. Pinnock, R. Rice, J. Sanders, W. Hasker, and D. Basinger,*

*The Openness of God (Downers Grove, IL: The InterVarsity Press, 1994), 155–76, see p. 165.]*

Biblical prophesy apparently involving future free choices must be interpreted in some less than *prima-facie* sense.

*[Richard Rice, ‘Biblical Support for a New Perspective’, Pinnock et al., The Openness of God, 11 – 58, see pp. 50–7.]*

If Christ *knows* that Peter will betray Him three times before the cock crows, then Peter’s betrayal is not a libertarian free choice. Peter couldn’t help it, and his remorse is misplaced. Perhaps the foreknowledge is based on God’s knowledge of His own intentions. If Peter is free in the libertarian

sense, then Christ does not know, but perhaps strongly believes that Peter will betray Him. God has a great deal more power over how things will turn out than the rest of us, but regarding knowledge of the future, as it is shaped by free human choices, He is as much in the dark as we are. As the Open Theists are well aware this is a view very foreign to the traditional philosophical conception of God, and, I would suggest, almost equally foreign to the beliefs of most ordinary Christians.

Certainly Anselm takes it for granted that ‘that than which no greater can be conceived’ must possess all possible knowledge, and, unlike the Open Theists, he takes it for granted that possible

knowledge includes knowledge of future free choices. Open Theism is not an option for him. But its chief rival in the contemporary debate, Molinism, is equally irreconcilable with traditional, classical theism as Anselm, along with Augustine and Boethius and Aquinas among many others, understands it. The Molinist holds that humans have libertarian freedom and that God does indeed know the future. This is possible because God has ‘middle knowledge’. There exists, as brute phenomena, and antecedent to the divine will, a set of true propositions about how any possible agent would freely choose in any possible situation. These are sometimes called

‘counterfactuals of freedom’. God chooses which agents and situations to actualize, and so He can control and know in advance what will happen.

[Alfred J. Freddoso translates Part I of Molina’s *Liberi Arbitrii cum Gratiae Donis, Divina Prae-scientia, Providentia, Praedestinatione et Reprobatione Concordia*, with an explanatory introduction, in *On Divine Foreknowledge* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988). Thomas P. Flint offers an explanation and defense of Molinism in *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).]

In the contemporary debate the main criticism raised against Molinism has been the ‘grounding problem’. It is quite standard to

suppose that a proposition is true because it states what is the case. This is in fact Anselm's understanding of what the truth of a proposition consists in. But the Molinist position is that the true 'counterfactuals of freedom' exist before (perhaps temporally and certainly logically) God has chosen to bring any creature and created situation into being. They hold even if the creature and/or situation to which they refer never exist. So it is not some actual matter of fact which grounds their truth. Anselm's understanding of the truth conditions for propositions entails that if a proposition is about a libertarian free choice then it is the actual free choice of the agent which 'makes'

(in some sense) the proposition about the choice to be true. If the created free agent could really do otherwise, and if the absolute origin of the choice is the act of will of the agent, then, in the absence of the created agent and the choice, there seems to be nothing which could possibly ground the truth of the proposition.

In addition to the grounding problem, the Molinist proposal makes it difficult to see how a choice can be free in the libertarian sense. If the truth of the counterfactual precedes the existence of the agent and the choice, then, if God should decide to actualize the agent and the situation involving the choice, the

choice cannot fail to occur. The actual agent cannot choose otherwise than as the pre-existent proposition states he will choose. How, then, could the choice be free in the libertarian sense? And yet the present-day Molinist seems committed to the position that the truth of the counterfactual of freedom does not depend upon the actual choice of a free agent.

These seem to be sufficiently serious problems to discredit Molinism, and there will be more to say about them in the next chapter when we discuss Anselm's answer to the question of how God knows future free choices. But this is not the end of the Molinist's difficulties in light of traditional, classical theism.

Another problem lies in the fact that the Molinist proposes an inferior mode of divine knowing. On Anselm's understanding God's knowledge is not discursive. To know through a process of deduction is a radically inferior way of knowing. God's knowledge, as explained in Chapter 6, is direct and causal. Things exist because God knows them immediately. If God knows what is to us past, present, and future, it is because He causes them directly. Anselm's analysis of how this is possible for future phenomena will be the subject of most of the next chapter. This is clearly at odds with the Molinist conception on which God deduces what will be the case from

knowing the counterfactuals of freedom and from knowing His own choices within the framework of this ‘middle knowledge’.

There is an even more fundamental problem with Molinism. Traditional, classical theism as Anselm understood it, and as I set it out in Chapter 1 and again in Chapter 6, entails that all that is not God is made by God. Nothing exists outside of God except what He has created. If there existed things entirely independent of God, then His omnipotence would not be absolute. This is a central pillar of the traditional, classical theist understanding of God, and yet Molinism denies it. Molinism proceeds from the assumption

that there exist, antecedently to and independently of the will of God, a set of counterfactuals of freedom. They exist, as brute phenomena, forming a contingent but unalterable framework which defines and circumscribes what God can achieve. From Anselm's perspective this is far too radical a limitation on the omnipotence of God. The Molinist God is rather like a man born in prison. He is free to choose which corner to sit in, but he must stay inside the bars, he is not responsible for them, and he cannot do a thing about them.

The Molinist might respond that the counterfactuals of freedom are no more constraining than the truths of logic and morality which Anselm and traditional, classical

theism take to be necessary and not made by God. But this is a mistake. Anselm (and Augustine and Aquinas) take the truths of logic and morality to be grounded in the very nature of God. Logic is our way of representing how we must think of how being has to be. And all being is the reflection of Absolute Being, which is God. The moral order is our way of expressing how the rational agent can best reflect the standard of all value, which is God. So the truths of logic and morality do not exist independently of God. Nothing exists independently of God. The Molinist position reintroduces a sort of theistic platonism, where God is the Demiurge who looks to an independent World of the

Forms in order to create. True, Plato's Demiurge 'created' using the pre-existing, material receptacle, but otherwise it was limited only by necessary truth. The Molinist's God is even more circumscribed, being limited by propositions stating contingent facts. This is fundamentally inconsistent with traditional, classical theism which insists that God is the *Creator omnium*.

I shall argue in the next chapter that the Anselmian position does not fall prey to any of these difficulties. God knows what any created agent 'will' do because He is eternal and all times are equally present to Him. He 'sees' the agent doing what it does. This does mean that God cannot know

what the created agent chooses ‘until’ (logically, not temporally) he chooses it. I noted in Chapter 6 that Anselm allows this conclusion although it is radical for an otherwise traditional, classical theist. But Anselm is committed to the view that created free agents have a measure of aseity, and hence of primary causal power. This means we can have a causal impact on God. The Molinist might argue that this is a significant infringement on divine sovereignty. On Anselm’s view, unlike with Molinism, God cannot decide which creaturely choices to bring about by choosing whom to create on the basis of His knowledge of what any possible agent would freely choose in any

possible situation. The Anselmian response is that God's having to 'wait and see' is a limitation only in the most qualified sense. It is the inevitable outcome of God's making free created agents. It is logically impossible that God control the choices of free agents, and it is up to them to bring about their choices. So He cannot know before they choose how they will choose. In making creatures who could function as causal agents in their own right God has placed some of the events of the universe outside of His causal control. In one sense this is a limitation on God. There are creatures who can act outside of God's will, and He could prevent them from doing so only by destroying what is perhaps

the best thing about them, their freedom. The important point is that this is a limitation which God chooses to take upon Himself. And He chooses it for a reason. Free creatures are a great good. Were we to hold that He simply cannot make genuinely free creatures, that would be ascribing limitation to God. The fact that He can and does make such creatures is an expression of His power and His goodness. True, He cannot control them and simultaneously leave them free, and He cannot know what they choose except by ‘seeing’ them choose, but it seems unreasonable to describe this self-imposed ‘limitation’ as a failure of omnipotence. And in any case,

regarding divine sovereignty, the Molinist is in a much worse position than the Anselmian. It is by His own choice that Anselm's God finds Himself confronted by free agents whose choices He cannot control. The Molinist God is simply limited by a fixed framework of counterfactuals of freedom to which He must conform, but which He did not choose in any sense at all.

The other criticism which the Molinist might level against the Anselmian is that Anselm's view does mean that there cannot be true counterfactuals of freedom. That is, only propositions which state the fact of an actual choice made by an actual agent can be a true proposition about a free

choice. And don't we often make claims about what someone would have chosen in other circumstances? More importantly, doesn't the Bible make statements which seem to be counterfactuals of freedom? Jesus tells the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida that, 'if the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes'. As for Capernaum, 'if the miracles done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have been standing yet' (Matt. 11: 22—4). These examples ought to be a bit disquieting for the Molinist in that, if they are genuinely counterfactuals of freedom, God has chosen to actualize the situations in which

people do evil, rather than the good they would have done otherwise. But perhaps the Molinist will respond that, working within the framework of middle knowledge, God may see that some greater good will be achieved if the people of Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom, who would have behaved better under different circumstances, are left to their evil. But this raises again the problem that God is limited. He is trapped within a framework of contingent truth which, under this proposal, necessitates that He can achieve the greater good only by letting some of His people, whom He could have saved, be destroyed.

But our question here is more a

problem about ordinary language. If the Anselmian position entails that there are no true counterfactuals of freedom, what are we to make of those propositions which seem to make meaningful claims about what would be chosen in certain non-actual situations? The simplest response is to hold that such propositions are in fact about the actual world. For example, they may make claims about the actual character or motives or history of an agent, or state what people usually do in such situations. Jesus, in addressing the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum, is presumably not mainly concerned with stating a truth of counterfactual freedom

relative to long-dead citizens of ancient, wicked cities. His point in addressing the inhabitants of these towns is to say that, ‘You people are even worse than the folks in Tyre and Sidon and Sodom!’ That is a claim about the actual world, and perhaps that is what the Biblical statement means. I suggest that it would be difficult to discover a proposition which seems to be a counterfactual of freedom, and which might really be *true*, which cannot be reasonably analyzed as a statement about the actual world. The Molinist’s criticisms of the Anselmian position can be met, while Molinism suffers from a number of serious problems. The philosopher who would reconcile

libertarian free will with divine foreknowledge is well advised to consider the Anselmian alternative. As usual, it is helpful to set the stage by spelling out the state of the question as Anselm inherited it.

## AUGUSTINE AND BOETHIUS ON RECONCILING FREEDOM AND DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE

I have argued that Augustine is a compatibilist. There is less evidence to go on in the case of Boethius, but what there is seems to point in that direction. Both, as I noted in Chapter 6, very clearly hold that God is the cause of everything, and they seem to

include human choices. Yet both are concerned to show that divine foreknowledge does not conflict with human freedom, and both do indeed advance the debate. Between them they propose many of the key elements which Anselm will adopt and adapt in offering the first (possibly the best) attempt at reconciling real libertarian freedom with divine foreknowledge. It will prove historically interesting and philosophically enlightening to look first at the solutions which Augustine and Boethius offer to the problem of freedom and foreknowledge. The end of the chapter will be devoted to a brief look at their views on God's eternity.

In *De libero arbitrio* Augustine spells out the standard dilemma. If God knows the future, and God's knowledge is infallible, then the future must, of necessity, turn out as God foreknows. But since God's knowledge encompasses the choices of created agents, and necessity is opposed to freedom, it seems that the foreknown choices cannot be voluntary. Augustine sets out to prove that, while foreknowledge does entail a sort of necessity, it is not the necessity of compulsion that would conflict with human freedom. If I am correct in my interpretation of Augustine, which reads him as a compatibilist even in this earlier work, then we need to be careful in understanding what sort of

necessity he would take to conflict with freedom.

Anselm's doctrine of libertarian freedom holds that if your choice is the unique and inevitable product of causes which do not originate in yourself, whether these causes are efficient or final, and whether this ultimate source is nature or God, then the choice is necessitated and hence not free. Anselm argues that, relative to the created agent, this means that freedom requires open options, since it is only the 'winning out' of one sort of God-given motivation over another that is up to the creature. If there are no options, the choice is determined by God and hence is not free in a way that can ground moral responsibility.

This is not Augustine's understanding. Freedom, for Augustine, means being able to pursue the objects which you judge the most desirable. If the choice comes from your own will, based on your own judgments and desires, it is free. Options are not especially relevant although, if you desired otherwise, you could choose other than you do. Thus a choice which follows uniquely and inevitably from God-given desires is not thereby unfree. This becomes clear in *De libero arbitrio* when Augustine asks his interlocutor Evodius whether or not God's foreknowing that He will make Evodius happy a year from now would mean that Evodius will not *willingly* be

happy. They agree that that would be absurd because everyone by nature always wants to be happy, and so of course Evodius will be happy willingly in a year, and hence he will be happy freely. So it cannot be the case that God's foreknowledge conflicts with human freedom. ‘Similarly with a culpable will, if you should have one in the future, it would not on that account not be a will, just because God knew it would exist in the future.’

Anselm would not find this argument compelling. The foreknown ‘choice’ to be happy is necessitated by human nature and could not be otherwise, so it is not free in Anselm’s sense. And clearly the ‘choice’ to be happy is not *per*

*se*, setting aside questions of how to achieve happiness, a morally significant choice of the sort in which Anselm is interested, the sort that is relevant to merit and salvation. And so, from Anselm's perspective, Augustine's concluding analogy between the future desire to be happy and the future culpable choice fails, since a culpable choice cannot be the product of necessitating desires which inevitably motivate the will towards one object, without genuine options.

The sort of necessity that Augustine sees as in conflict with free choice is causal compulsion which forces its effects in the absence of voluntary choice. Augustine explains that the stone

which falls did not, of course, *want* to fall, since it has neither reason nor will. Rather, ‘it is compelled by the necessity of its own nature’. The human being does not want to grow old and die, and so this happens not voluntarily, but by necessity, in the sense that it is against our will and outside the exercise of our own power that we grow old and die (3.3). It is true that God’s foreknowledge entails that the foreknown events cannot fail to take place. But Augustine concludes that he has successfully reconciled freedom and divine foreknowledge as long as he has shown that the foreknowledge does not impose any externally compelling necessity which would

(*per impossibile*) force the will to choose ‘against its will’.

In the somewhat later *De civitate Dei* 5.9, Augustine reiterates the claim that divine foreknowledge does not entail a necessity that would contradict human freedom, and again he has in mind the sort of compelling necessity that stands outside of, and possibly in conflict with, the will. His aim, as he explains it here, is to refute Cicero’s position that for foreknowledge to be possible, events would have to be the product of ‘fate’, that is, of the sort of necessitating causes which entail compulsion. Cicero, says Augustine, preferred to deny divine foreknowledge rather than suppose that human freedom is an

illusion. Augustine disputes the claim that foreknowledge implies ‘fate’. He agrees that every event must have a cause, indeed the ultimate source of the whole system is God, but that does not translate into universal compulsion which rules out voluntary choice. ‘Now if there is for God a fixed order of all causes, it does not follow that nothing depends on our free choice. Our wills themselves are in the order of causes, which is, for God, fixed, and is contained in his foreknowledge, since human acts of will are the causes of human activities.’ The argument which Augustine advances in both *De libero arbitrio* and *De civitate Dei* is thus, from the Anselmian

perspective, very modest. At the most it succeeds in showing that divine foreknowledge does not entail the sort of causal compulsion which acts upon something willy nilly.

According to Boethius in the *Philosophiae Consolationis* Augustine's argument has not really shown even that. It is indeed helpful, Boethius grants, to point out that mere foreknowledge, in itself, does not compel choices in a way which would conflict with freedom. None the less, Cicero's point seems well-taken. It may be that the foreknowledge does not exercise any causal force, but we still need to ask how foreknowledge is possible. Human beings can have foreknowledge of

some events, such as the rising of the sun tomorrow. But our knowledge is rooted in our observation of present events and our understanding of the causally compelling factors which produce a future effect. If the future event were not compelled through a chain of causes, some links of which we can observe in the present, we could not possibly have foreknowledge of it. Thus our foreknowledge, while not in itself causally compelling, is conclusive evidence of compulsion. Having said that God's foreknowledge does not compel future events, it remains to be shown how future events which are not compelled could possibly be foreknown.

And here Boethius contributes an important argument which will form a supporting pillar of Anselm's solution to the problem of freedom and foreknowledge. God's knowledge is different from ours because God is eternal. It is especially interesting that it is Boethius who introduces God's eternal manner of knowing into the freedom/foreknowledge debate, when it is Augustine who, in other contexts, does so much groundbreaking work on the concept of divine eternity. But Augustine himself does not bring together the two issues of God's relationship to time on the one hand, and the foreknowledge dilemma on the other. Anselm is clearly influenced by Augustine's

revolutionary work on the question of God and time, and the validity of Anselm's solution to the foreknowledge dilemma depends in part upon his analysis of this question. I discuss Augustine's views on time and eternity and Boethius's continuation of Augustine's work below. First, though, we should see how Boethius uses the concept of divine eternity to solve the problem he has raised about foreknowledge as evidence of compulsion.

Human foreknowledge does indeed rest upon the foreknown events being compelled by causes of which we can have present knowledge. So if the issue were human foreknowledge,

Augustine's argument would not go through. Human foreknowledge does indirectly entail the sort of necessitating compulsion that conflicts with free will. But God's knowledge is different. The reason we can know the future only from its causes in the present is that we are temporal beings. God is not. 'Now that God is eternal is the common judgment of all who live by reason . . . Eternity, then is the whole, simultaneous and perfect possession of boundless life. . . such that neither is anything future lacking from it, nor has anything past flowed away. . . and that must necessarily both always be present to itself, possessing itself in the present, and hold as present the

infinity of moving time ...’ Knowledge understands things according to its own nature, which, in the case of God, is eternal. His knowledge, ‘... is permanent in the simplicity of his present, and embracing all the infinite spaces of the future and the past, considers them in his simple act of knowledge as though they were now going on... it looks forward on all things as though from the highest peak of the world’.

So God’s foreknowledge does not depend upon knowing any preceding, compelling causes, and the claim that foreknowledge entails the necessity of compulsion is defeated. But how does the claim that God is eternal

resolve the problem of freedom and foreknowledge? Many contemporary philosophers of religion have argued that it does not. The original dilemma proceeds from the premise that God's knowledge in the past is fixed and so an agent cannot choose otherwise than God has foreknown he would choose. Thus foreknowledge does entail a sort of necessity. This is true even if we grant both Augustine's point that God's foreknowledge does not constitute an externally compelling power, and Boethius's point that it is not based on knowledge of preceding, compelling causes which necessitate the future choice. But, it is currently argued, if there is any

sort of necessity which results in an agent not being able to choose otherwise, then the agent is not free. And the argument concerning freedom and divine knowledge proceeds to the same conclusion if, instead of starting with the claim that God's knowledge is fixed in the past, we begin instead with the claim that God's knowledge is fixed in eternity. And so, conclude many contemporary philosophers of religion, Boethius is mistaken to think that he has solved the dilemma of freedom and foreknowledge by introducing the claim that God's knowledge is eternal.

As I discussed in Chapter 6, Boethius himself is not interested

in defending libertarian freedom. There is every reason to believe that he is a compatibilist along Augustinian lines. He makes it quite clear that he holds that it is God's knowledge that causes our choices and not vice versa. ‘... God possesses this present instant of comprehension and sight of all things not from the issuing of future events but from his own simplicity... For the nature of his knowledge as we have described it, embracing all things in a present act of knowing, establishes a measure for everything, but owes nothing to later events.’ Boethius sees no conflict between God's causal omniscience and human freedom. ‘These things being so, the freedom of the will remains to

mortals inviolate, nor are laws proposing rewards and punishments for wills free from all necessity unjust.' That being the case one might suppose that he would have nothing to say to the contemporary critics who argue that God's eternal knowledge precludes an agent's being able to do otherwise and hence conflicts with libertarian freedom. But though he himself does not defend libertarianism, he introduces an important point which Anselm will use to great advantage.

Boethius grants that God's eternal knowledge entails a kind of necessity, but it is what he calls a 'conditional' necessity. That is, it is a sort of logical necessity which

follows upon the antecedent positing of a state of affairs. It is logically necessary that if  $x$ , then  $x$ . If I am writing, I cannot possibly be doing otherwise than writing. If I am writing, then it is conditionally necessary that I be writing. If God, or anyone, knows that I am writing, then I cannot be doing otherwise than writing, and it is conditionally necessary that I am writing. But it would be absurd to claim that this ‘inability to do otherwise’ and this conditional necessity conflict with freedom. If they do, then we need nothing more to refute libertarianism than the claim that ‘If I’m writing, it is not possible that I not be writing’. And since this is a necessary truth, libertarianism would be proved

necessarily false.

Surely from the fact that ‘If I am writing, it is conditionally necessary that I am writing’, it does not follow that my choice to write is not free. There is nothing in conditional necessity to entail any sort of causal necessity, so my choice is not causally determined by conditional necessity. Moreover, although Boethius himself does not go on to make this point, it is entirely consistent with conditional necessity that my choice originates with me and that it might have been otherwise in the way required by libertarianism. If the necessity in question follows upon my choice as its ultimate source, it is what we might call a ‘self-imposed’ necessity, and so

cannot be in conflict with my free will.

The opponent might respond that none of the above speaks to the issue, since our concern is to reconcile freedom with *foreknowledge*. That is, it is claimed that God knows that I shall be writing before I ever sit down to write. Thus the necessity entailed by divine foreknowledge cannot be the conditional necessity proposed by Boethius because it temporally precedes the state of affairs in question, rather than coinciding with or following from it. But that is where divine eternity comes in. Let us say that God knows what He knows as present. Then His knowledge may coincide with the states of affairs

known and so the necessity entailed can be a conditional necessity. And even though from our perspective God's knowledge precedes the state of affairs in time, the only necessity involved, assuming the foreknown event is a free choice and not a causally necessary event like the rising of the sun, is a necessity which is conditional upon positing the state of affairs as actually present.

But God beholds those future events which happen because of the freedom of the will, as present; they therefore, related to the divine perception, become necessary through the condition of the divine knowledge, but considered in themselves do not lose the absolute freedom of their nature. Therefore

all those things which God foreknows will come to be, will without doubt come to be, but certain of them proceed from free will, and although they do come to be, yet in happening they do not lose their proper nature, according to which, before they happened, they might also not have happened.... So also, those things God possesses as present, beyond doubt will happen, but of them the one kind [causally necessitated like the rising of the sun] is consequent upon the necessity of things, the other upon the power of those doing them. So therefore we were not wrong in saying that these, if related to the divine knowledge, are necessary, if considered in themselves, are free from the bonds of necessity...

On the Boethian account, God's eternal knowledge of future free choices, which is from our perspective *foreknowledge*, does entail necessity, but it is only a conditional necessity. We shall see below that there is some doubt about whether or not Boethius believes that the objects of God's eternal knowledge are future things and events *themselves*, thus there is a question concerning exactly what the posited situation from which conditional necessity follows actually consists in. And Boethius himself was not interested in reconciling *libertarian* freedom with divine foreknowledge. None the less his analysis of this conditional necessity which follows upon

God's eternal knowledge plays a key role in Anselm's effort to solve the dilemma.

## AUGUSTINE AND BOETHIUS ON THE NATURE OF DIVINE ETERNITY

Anselm follows Boethius in saying that God is eternal and that His knowledge imposes only a conditional necessity upon free choices. (For Anselm the term '*consequent* necessity' is most appropriate.) But Augustine and Boethius have not provided all the elements of Anselm's solution. To solve the dilemma Anselm adopts a distinctive view of time and eternity. In order to understand Anselm's approach, and the work

by Augustine and Boethius that precedes it, it is helpful to say a little about these issues as they are discussed by contemporary philosophers. The contemporary debate has shown that there are deep problems with positing a timeless God, if the concept of divine eternity does not explicitly include a particular theory of time, the view that time is essentially tenseless. This theory of time is sometimes called ‘eternalism’.

*[It is also sometimes called the ‘B-theory’ after John McTaggart’s division of temporal events into an A-series where it is location in past, present, or future that is essential, and a B-series in which it is the ordering as earlier or later that counts. See ‘The Unreality of Time’, Mind 17 (1908), 456-73.]*

I eschew the name since, among philosophers of religion, ‘eternity’ is used to express God’s mode of being. (I would suggest that contemporary metaphysicians settle upon a different name, since the philosophers of religion beat them to this one by a couple of millennia.) I shall sometimes refer to the tenseless view as ‘four-dimensionalism’. The term has several different meanings in contemporary metaphysics, and I do not wish to confuse nor to limit dogmatically the number of dimensions open to discussion. But, as will be shown in the next chapter, this nomenclature fits nicely with Anselm’s view. Anselm sees divine eternity as a sort of fifth dimension, containing and

transcending the three spatial dimensions and the dimension of time. Thus ‘four-dimensionalism’ seems a good name to capture Anselm’s theory that all of space and time exists equally as immediately beheld by God. Should there be reason to believe that the created universe is subject to more than these four dimensions, Anselm’s view could comfortably move God up to whatever numbered dimension ‘contains’ all the rest. But Anselm sees only the four, and so ‘four-dimensionalism’ seems an appropriate term.

A number of contemporary philosophers of religion have argued, correctly in my view, that the essentially tensed view of time,

sometimes called ‘presentism’, cannot be reconciled with the proposal of a timeless and omniscient God. By ‘presentism’ I mean roughly the position that there is an absolute present. The past and all that existed and happened in it does not exist because it is no longer present. The future and all that will exist and happen in it does not exist because it is not yet present. I shall use the terms ‘past’ and ‘future’ for short to include the times and all that exists and happens in them. If God, as Boethius suggests, sees all of time ‘at once’ and ‘as if it were present’ when in fact only the present moment actually exists, then He does not see things as they are. He does not know what

time it is *now*. He does not know whether I am in fact alive, dead, or yet to be born. Surely this consequence conflicts with any adequate view of omniscience, not to mention the ordinary assumptions made in the course of religious worship.

These difficulties with the concept of a God who is both timeless and omniscient can be avoided only if we accept the essentially tenseless, four-dimensionalist, view of time. This position is popular among contemporary metaphysicians, but to my knowledge few contemporary philosophers of religion adopt it.

*[Paul Helm (Eternal God) is the only name that comes to mind. Helm denies*

*libertarian freedom, so he does not propose the solution to the freedom and foreknowledge dilemma found in Anselm.]*

Nor does it seem to have been popular during the Middle Ages.

*[I have not made a study of the medieval philosophers after Anselm's day with regard to this question, but in the course of developing a general acquaintance with some key figures and issues in later medieval philosophy I have not run across any philosopher who seems clearly to adopt a four-dimensionalist view of time. Fr Brian Shanley points out that Duns Scotus criticizes Aquinas on the grounds that he (Scotus) takes Aquinas's view of eternity to entail the four-dimensionalist theory which he holds to be the wrong position. Fr Shanley, however, argues that Scotus has misunderstood Aquinas and, in fact, the earlier philosopher does not advance four-dimensionalism. The account which*

*Shanley gives of Aquinas's position leaves Aquinas open to the charge that on his understanding, God cannot know what time it is now. (Brian Shanley, OP, 'Eternal Knowledge of the Temporal in Aquinas', American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly 71 (1997), 197-224.) I suggest, as a matter of speculation, that it may have been his extensive knowledge of Anselm's work which led Scotus to read, or misread, Aquinas the way he did.]*

Boethius and Augustine do sometimes sound rather four-dimensionalist, but Anselm is apparently the first consistently and explicitly to embrace the position. The four-dimensionalist view holds that the present moment is not ontologically privileged. What a temporal observer at any given instant of time perceives as past, present,

and future is relative to that observer at that time. In fact all times exist equally. And thus the problem of God not knowing what time it is at some absolute and italicized *now* does not exist. There is no such thing. We temporal perceivers make a mistake when we suppose that what we, at a given moment, perceive as the present, has a privileged ontological status. God does see all times as equally real, and that is because that is how they *are*.

There are many ways of analyzing the existence of temporal objects and events through time on this view. The key division is between perdurantism and endurantism. A standard

interpretation of the former has it that objects or events (the same analysis can, but need not, be accepted for objects as for events) consist of temporal parts, such that the whole is the sum of the parts. A standard interpretation of the latter holds that the whole object or event exists at each time that it exists, and that it exists (perhaps as ‘repeatable’) through all the different times at which it exists. There are other interpretations, and a plethora of further distinctions can be made. Happily for our purposes here we do not have to decide between the two basic views, nor even spell them out in any detail. As the very first to deal with the question, Anselm has some interesting

things to say on the issue of how a temporal being or event exists in a four-dimensional universe, but he certainly does not propose a developed theory. Thus it will suffice to speak in a somewhat loose way, granting that more care would be needed if the project here was to offer a fully developed theory of the tenseless view of time. There will be more to say when we get to Anselm's explication of the relationship of divine eternity to the spatio-temporal world. Here it is enough to mention a few common criticisms of four-dimensionalism, so that the concepts are clear when we attempt to discuss theories of time in Augustine, Boethius, and Anselm.

The four-dimensionalist does not say that change and the passage of time are somehow illusory. Rather, he denies that such change involves any real coming into and passing out of being. He may, for example, analyze change by saying that ‘x at time t is different from x at time t + 1’. Anyone who has glanced at the contemporary metaphysics of the issue will realize that pages of distinctions could be added to specify what ‘x’, i.e. an object or event, consists in, and how ‘time t’ and ‘different’ are to be understood. The point is just that the subscriber to the tenseless view has the resources to describe the phenomena of the world of experience, and so need not admit,

as some contemporary philosophers of religion have charged, that he somehow denies or neglects ordinary experience. As Augustine points out, with regard to experience, the presentist is not in a good position either. The presentist holds that each thing exists only at the unextended instant at which the non-existent future becomes the non-existent past.

Admittedly it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to see ourselves imaginatively as the time-worm-like (or successively repeating) beings that the four-dimensionalist says we are. But Anselm's argument is brutally simple. Our philosophical endeavors must be rooted in an

adequate conception of God. The beginning point in all discussion of God, and the one that is non-negotiable, is that God is ‘that than which a greater cannot be conceived’. He is absolutely perfect. Anselm, as I shall discuss in the next chapter, argues that God’s eternity follows from His perfection, and the universe as a four-dimensional, space-time ‘block’ follows from God’s eternity. It does not matter how strange a way of looking at things this is. Unless it is logically impossible, it is the way things are.

Some philosophers have suggested that four-dimensionalism has the unacceptable consequence of making the temporal creature

eternal and hence closing the metaphysical gap between God and creation.

[William Hasker, ‘The Absence of a Timeless God’, 196–7.]

But this is a mistake if by ‘eternal’ we mean to describe the mode of God’s existence. True, on the tenseless view, no temporal thing comes into or passes out of being in an absolute way. This, of course, does not conflict with the notion that God is the *Creator omnium*. All that is, that is not God, is caused to be by God. If God causes x, which does not exist at t, to exist at  $t + 1$ , then x ‘comes into being’ at  $t + 1$  from the perspective of the temporal observer. But x at  $t + 1$  is ‘always

there' in the four-dimensional universe. This does entail the interesting consequence that for the four-dimensionalist, relative to divine creation, the question of whether or not the past is temporally infinite is not terribly pressing. Traditional, classical theism has it that God's creation involves His immediate causal act of keeping everything in being from moment to moment. Whether or not there are a finite or an infinite number of past moments does not make much difference to the analysis of God's creative activity.

*[Averroes says something very like this in arguing that the more 'fundamentalist' Muslims should not call his view that the world has always existed 'heretical'. But*

*Averroes holds to the infinity of the past because he believes in a presentist universe and an immutable God. This forces him to the conclusion that God does not act in the world or even know individuals. (See my ‘Anselm and his Islamic Contemporaries on Divine Necessity and Eternity’, American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly 81 (2007), 373-93.)]*

In any case, though each temporal thing is ‘always there’ in the four-dimensional universe, Boethius’s distinction between the temporal and the eternal still applies. The temporal being is ‘stretched out’ across time, perhaps consisting of parts, perhaps as an ever-changing or ‘repeatable’ whole, but either way as something limited by its temporal existence. It does not

even have access to *itself* across time, much less to all of time. God is absolutely different. He exists wholly and perfectly and ‘sees’ and acts upon all of time.

With these points in mind, we can look at Anselm’s sources on the nature of time, and the relationship of time to eternity. I take it that Augustine and Boethius are the most important, perhaps the only sources. I have noted that Augustine did not explicitly appeal to divine eternity in solving the foreknowledge dilemma. Boethius does, but, as I mentioned, a fully satisfactory solution requires not just the view that God is eternal but must also posit four-dimensionalism. And so it is helpful, both in assessing

the historical influences on Anselm, and in order to get a clearer philosophical picture of Anselm's understanding of eternity, to ask whether Augustine or Boethius endorsed the tenseless view of time.

The question is a difficult one because many of the texts can reasonably be interpreted in either of two ways. One accords with the view which I attribute to Anselm: God is eternal, that is, He is not 'in' or 'at' any given time, nor is His life stretched out across time. None the less all of time is immediately present to Him, and so it all exists equally. Thus divine eternity entails the tenseless view of time. But the texts on divine eternity in Augustine and Boethius

can also support a presentist rather than a four-dimensionalist interpretation: God exists only in the present moment, since all that there is is the present. God is eternal in the sense that His nature and His life are identical and perfectly simple, and He does not change at all. Moreover He is absolutely omniscient in that, at each present instant of time, He knows, simultaneously, infallibly, and in complete detail, all that is at that instant, all that was before that instant, and all that will be after that instant. But He knows all that is, was, or will be in one, changeless, and everlasting act of knowing.

*[William Lane Craig has suggested that Augustine may understand divine*

*omniscience as God's knowing just the eternal, archetypical ideas of things; 'Augustine on Foreknowledge and Free Will', *Augustinian Studies* 15 (1984), 41–63, see p. 62. But Augustine frequently says that God foreknows the particular sins of individual creatures, so this seems an unlikely interpretation. See *De libero arbitrio* 3.2; *De Genesi ad litteram* 9.4 and 11.8 – 9; *De civitate Dei* 12.23.]*

(This is just one way of expressing the non-four-dimensionalist reading. There are numerous variants on this interpretation.) If this second interpretation is genuinely what Augustine and Boethius have in mind, then their views are susceptible to the criticism noted above. If presentism is true, either God's knowledge changes and so He is not immutable—a

conclusion that Augustine and Boethius adamantly deny—or He does not know things as they are, including what time it is *now*.

*[Augustine's famous meditation on the nature of time in Book 11 of the Confessions—a text with passages which can be read in support of either of the two interpretations in question—is motivated by the desire to reconcile the concept of an immutable God with that of a Creator who acts and interacts with the world.]*

Nor, on this presentist reading, could He know all things directly. That is, His knowledge could not all consist in immediately causing what there actually *is*. If presentism is true, then all that exists is what is present, and so God could not possibly know things past and future directly,

since they are not there to know. But if He knows the present directly, then, again, His knowledge must change and He is not immutable. If He knows all that He knows in one, changeless act of knowledge to which past, present, and future are there as if they were all equally present, then apparently He does not have *any* direct knowledge. On this presentist reading God's knowledge of the future is not derived from future events being actually present to Him. They cannot be, since they do not yet exist. Nor can He know the past directly. And He does not know the present as the ever-changing reality which it is.

How, then, on this presentist

interpretation, could He know past, present, and future, as if they were present to His single, changeless act of knowledge? Boethius's position seems to be that God's knowledge comes from knowing Himself as the cause of all. That is, He knows in one, perfect, and immutable act all that He intends to do, or better, all that He in His one act, *does*. Since Boethius is not a libertarian, this explanation for divine omniscience does not signal any inconsistency in his thought. On the presentist interpretation God's immutability and His foreknowledge of free choices can be reconciled by saying that He changelessly knows all that He causes. And that is exactly what

Boethius says in the *Consolation*, as I noted in Chapter 6.

And God possesses this present instant of comprehension and sight of all things not from the issuing of future events but from his own simplicity... it is not right that our future actions should be said to provide the cause of the knowledge of God. For the nature of his knowledge as we have described it, embracing all things in a present act of knowing, establishes a measure for everything, but owes nothing to later events.

I shall not offer a conclusive decision between these two possible interpretations of Augustine's and Boethius's views on divine eternity. I hope to show, though, that even if they do

sometimes suggest the four-dimensionalist view, they do not do so in an explicit or consistent way, as Anselm does. A review of Augustine and Boethius on the nature of time will serve to develop some of the points made above and to introduce new arguments to the discussion.

Augustine, in an early work, Question 17 of *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus* (probably written in 388), says, ‘All that is past does not now exist, and all that is future does not exist yet. Therefore all that is past and future is absent (*deest*). However nothing is absent to God, thus there is neither past nor future, but all is present to God.’ This sounds very like four-dimensionalism, but

the entire chapter is comprised by the above, and so there is really not enough to go on regarding Augustine's views.

In the work where he offers his lengthiest discussion of the dilemma of free will and divine foreknowledge, *De libero arbitrio* (the relevant books were finished in the early 390s), Augustine, as I said, does not invoke divine eternity to solve the problem. He does have his interlocutor, Evodius, mention that God is eternal, but only to elicit from Augustine the point that, none the less it cannot be denied that He acts in time. And he proposes an interesting analogy. God's knowledge of the future is rather like our knowledge of the past.

Our knowledge of the past does not apply compulsion to past events, and likewise God's knowledge of the future does not compel future events. On Augustine's view that God's causing our voluntary choices is not compulsion, this analogy suggests the presentist understanding of divine eternity. God knows in a single act in the present all the things and events which existed, exist now, and do not yet exist. When we remember the past, what we grasp cognitively is our present memory, not the actual events as they were happening. If God's knowledge of the future is like that, then presumably, in the present, He has a present understanding of all that

He will cause.

In *De diversis quaestib<sup>us</sup> ad Simplicianum*, completed in 397 shortly after the third book of *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine sounds very like a four-dimensionalist. ‘For what is future to God who surpasses all time? If the knowledge of God contains the things themselves (*res ipsas habet*), they are not future to Him, but present. For this reason it can be called not foreknowledge, but rather knowledge.’ His argument seems to recognize very clearly the problem with saying that God foreknows something which is future to Him and then, when it becomes present, knows it as present. Were that the sequence of

God's knowledge it would follow that '... something happened temporally within the knowledge of God, and that is most absurd and false'. He goes on to say that if God *foreknew* something as future, and His knowledge did *not* change, then He would continue to know as future, something which was present, and eventually past. And that is equally absurd. So we should not say that God has foreknowledge, but rather that He simply has knowledge. All of the above, I think, suggests four-dimensionalism. But then Augustine goes on to ask how this can be possible. Here would be the ideal place to explain that God can have direct knowledge of all of time, because it is all there present

to Him. But Augustine does not make this argument. He notes that when we use the term ‘knowledge’ of human beings we are inevitably talking about a phenomenon that involves temporality, and concludes that ‘God knows and foreknows in an ineffable way.’ The actual question of the chapter was the meaning of the scriptural text where God is said to ‘regret’ having made Saul king. Augustine notes that the idea that God could regret conflicts with divine foreknowledge, and it is this which prompts the argument that the concept of foreknowledge is actually itself inconsistent with what we believe about God. Having concluded that God knows in an ineffable way, he

moves on to the real point of the chapter which was to argue that God may also be said to ‘regret’ in an ineffable way. If this text suggests four-dimensionalism, it does not do so in a clear and sustained way.

Augustine’s most developed meditation of the nature of time is in Book 11 of the *Confessions*. And here again, he has much to say which sounds like four-dimensionalism. The discussion is prompted by a question which was supposed to prove the logical impossibility of the existence of the Christian’s God, Who is both perfect and the Creator. The question is: what was God doing before He made heaven and earth? The Christian position is that

there is a first day to the created world. But then, if God was not creating and suddenly made a world, He changed. A creating God as Christians understand Him cannot be immutable, so the argument goes, but a mutable being cannot be perfect. And so there is no God. Augustine answers that the question is ill-formed. Time is a category of the created universe, so there is no ‘before’ creation. This answer suggests, but is insufficient to prove, that Augustine embraces the tenseless view of time.

Adopting the four-dimensional view would indeed solve the problem here. If all of time is equally real, then an immutable God can act upon the

universe—making a temporally first day, parting the Red Sea, becoming Incarnate, judging the nations at the end times—in one, eternal act. And Augustine, in the course of his meditations, does say things that sound four-dimensionalist. ‘It is in eternity, which is supreme over time because it is a never-ending present, that you are at once before all past time and after all future time’.

. . . there might be people who would maintain that there are not three divisions of time but only one, the present, because the other two do not exist. Another view might be that past and future do exist, but that time emerges from some secret refuge when it passes from the

future to the present, and goes back into hiding when it moves from the present to the past. Otherwise, how do prophets see the future, if there is not yet a future to be seen? It is impossible to see what does not exist. . . Therefore both the past and the future do exist.

If the future and the past do exist, I want to know where they are. I may not be capable of such knowledge, but at least I know that wherever they are, they are not there as future or past, but as present. For if, wherever they are, they are future, they do not yet exist; if past, they no longer exist. So wherever they are and whatever they are, it is only by being present that they are.

The above texts suggest four-dimensionalism, but

Augustine follows them with several chapters in which he insists that past and future simply do not exist, and that the only way to know the past is to remember and the only way to know the future is to discern it from evidence in the present. He even suggests that God may reveal the future which does not yet exist through signs in the present, though he does not claim to understand how this can be so. He comes to the conclusion that the extension of time, which is exceedingly puzzling if all that really exists is the extensionless present, is actually a present, intra-mental phenomenon. In our minds we have a present memory of the past and a present anticipation of the future and we

perceive these as a sort of extension. This does not seem to be the tenseless view of time. But the text here does not necessitate a presentist reading. Perhaps Augustine is speaking from the purely human perspective. *To us* the past and future do not exist, but from the divine perspective, which is the one which establishes how reality actually *is*, all time is present. This four-dimensionalist reading of Book 11 of the *Confessions* is certainly possible. But the reading which entails presentism cannot be ruled out. One approach in interpreting philosophical texts holds that if there are several interpretations which seem equally plausible, the interpretation which accords with

the most *philosophically* adequate account should be preferred. In this case that would be the four-dimensionalist reading.

In the much later *De civitate Dei* we find the same problems of interpretation. In explaining that God sees all things immutably, Augustine says that temporal things, ‘are in the future, not yet in being, or in the present, already existing, or in the past, no longer in being. But God comprehends all these in a stable and eternal present... all things which he knows are present at the same time to his incorporeal vision.’ This passage could be interpreted either way. But there is, in the *De civitate Dei* a passage which is hard to read as anything other

than presentist. It begins in a way that might comfortably take a four-dimensionalist interpretation, but ends with a proposal that makes sense only if God is somehow in time. Augustine is writing about God's creative activity.

Even if he rested first and started work later (and I do not know how man can understand this) this 'first' and 'later' refer, without doubt, to things which first did not exist and later came into existence. But in God there was no new decision which altered or canceled a previous intention; instead, it was with one and the same eternal and unchanging design that he effected his creation. So long as things did not exist it was his decree that prevented their existence at first,

and when they came into being it was his will which brought them into existence later. In this way perhaps he shows, in a wonderful manner, to those who can see such things, that he did not stand in need of his creation, but produced his creature out of pure disinterested goodness, since he had continued in no less felicity without them from all eternity without beginning.

The four-dimensionalist view of time holds that all of time is simply *there* to God's eternity. At the end of this text Augustine clearly proposes the sort of situation which cannot have been the case if ours is a tenseless universe: God exists and the universe does not. If he is advancing the presentist position, Augustine need not hold

that the state of things ‘before’ creation involved what created, corporeal beings perceive as time.

*[In some places Augustine suggests that what we understand as time is dependent upon the changing thoughts of the created, angelic, consciousness through which the created world is brought into being. See my ‘St Augustine on Time and Eternity’.]*

So he can still maintain that there was no time, as we understand it, before creation. And he can subscribe to the view that God is simple and always and unchangeably knows what He knows and intends what He intends. So God is eternal. But this passage clearly suggests that God’s life precedes the first day of the created world in some *time-like* way, and that in turn entails an

essentially presentist view.

Augustine is very clear that God knows creatures immediately and in their unique and actual individuality. A glance at the *Confessions* leaves this beyond doubt. Here Augustine recounts the story of God's work in his own life, and the book is laced with prayers, both grateful and petitionary. Augustine maintained a vibrant personal relationship with his God, the sort which relies upon the assumption that God is there, taking an immediate interest in His creature. This means that God must know the creature *when it actually exists*. Augustine also says that God knows all times, and the objects and events contained in those times, in a

single, immutable act as if they were all immediately and equally present to Him. These two claims, that God knows individuals at the time they exist and that He knows all time as if it were present, can be reconciled only on the thesis that all time *is actually present* to God. That is, only the four-dimensionalist view allows us to say both that God is personal in the way required for religious worship, and that God immutably and directly knows past, present, and future. Augustine may indeed be a four-dimensionalist. Some of what he says points in that direction. But the texts certainly allow for the alternative interpretation.

[Richard Sorabji, in a very careful and

*knowledgeable discussion of Augustine's view on time, does not interpret Augustine as a four-dimensionalist. Sorabji himself does not consider the four-dimensionalist solution to the problem of immutable omniscience, and argues that a timeless and omniscient God is just impossible since He could not know what time it is now. Time, Creation and the Continuum (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 258–60.]*

The situation is the same with Boethius. There are texts which suggest four-dimensionalism: God's eternity, 'hold[s] as present the infinity of moving time'. The image of God looking 'forward on all things as though from the highest peak of the world' suggests that the things are really there to be seen.

[*Ibid.* In Book 4 Prose 6, though he is not really addressing the question of time and eternity, Boethius repeats an analogy found in Plotinus (*Enneads* 6.5.11) and later in Aquinas (*Summa Contra Gentiles* 1.66.7). ‘Therefore as reasoning is to understanding, as that which becomes is to that which is, as time is to eternity, as the circle is to its centre, so is the moving course of fate to the unmoving simplicity of providence.’ This analogy, too, suggests four-dimensionalism, in that all the points on the circumference of the circle (time) are equally present to the center of the circle (eternity), and are equally real.]

This impression is reinforced when Boethius follows this analogy immediately with the question of why God’s seeing things should make them necessary. He asks rhetorically, ‘After all, your looking at them

does not confer any necessity on those things you presently see, does it?' In discussing conditional necessity, the necessity that follows upon the positing of a given situation, Boethius says that 'God beholds those future events which happen because of the freedom of the will, as present...' All of these texts lend themselves to the four-dimensionalist interpretation.

But on the other hand Boethius frequently inserts a qualification. 'God. . . considers [all past and future] *as though* [my italics] (*quasi*) they were now going on.' And he distinguishes between the future as foreknown by God and as actually taking place. God sees things '... as present to him just

such as in time they will at some future point come to be'. Things are 'present indeed to him but future with reference to imposed conditions of time'. Most important is the text where Boethius says very clearly that God knows all things,

'... not from the issuing of future events but from his own simplicity. . . '. His knowledge 'embracing all things in a present act of knowing, establishes a measure for everything, but owes nothing to later events'. This is his final word on the subject, and clearly seems a proof-text for the non-four-dimensionalist interpretation. God, living in the present, since that is all there is, knows in one eternal and

immutable act all that was, is, and will be through being the absolute cause of all.

*[John Marenbon holds that it is probably a mistake to understand Boethius's picture of divine eternity as genuinely timeless. Rather, '... although events are future or past, God knows them in the sort of way that we know present events'. Marenbon does not address the problems with this position, such as whether or not God can know what time it is now; Boethius (Oxford University Press, 2003), 138.]*

And so Boethian eternity seems subject to the criticisms which contemporary philosophers have raised against the idea of a timeless God. If it is not the case that all of time is equally real and present to God, but God perceives it as if it were, it seems He does not see

things as they are. And if there is an absolute present, but in God's knowledge it is indistinguishable from times past and future, then God does not know what time it is *now*. Finally, if, as Augustine and Boethius both suggest, God knows all events in all times, not because they are, but because He is their cause, then divine foreknowledge cannot be reconciled with a created agent's having libertarian freedom.

The Augustinian/Boethian position on divine foreknowledge denies libertarian freedom. The contemporary Open Theists deny divine foreknowledge. And Molinism, though claiming to reconcile divine foreknowledge with libertarian freedom, is

fraught with difficulties and conflicts with traditional, classical theism. It is Anselm who succeeds in solving the dilemma of divine foreknowledge and libertarian freedom within the framework of traditional, classical theism.

# 9: Foreknowledge, Freedom, and Eternity: Part II Anselm's Solution

## DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE AND CONDITIONAL NECESSITY

Anselm, as a libertarian, must eschew the claim that God foreknows future events because He causes them. But Anselm is certainly not willing to entertain the suggestion that God does not know (what is to us at the present moment) the future. In *De concordia* he sets out to explain how God knows the future choices of beings who are free in

the libertarian sense. He begins by borrowing from Boethius's analysis of the sort of necessity which divine foreknowledge entails, but he goes well beyond Augustine and Boethius, clearly and consistently adopting four-dimensionalism, and so avoiding the problems raised against the concept of a timeless God by contemporary philosophers. In this chapter I explain Anselm's solution to the dilemma of libertarian freedom and divine omniscience and how it is made possible by his four-dimensionalist understanding of the nature of time.

In *De concordia* Anselm sets out the dilemma in the standard way.

'It certainly seems that God's foreknowledge and freedom of choice cannot be reconciled, because that which God foreknows necessarily exists in the future, and that which happens by free will comes about through no necessity.' Anselm accepts at the outset that God's knowledge does entail that future events happen with a sort of necessity. But he has argued all along that a choice, to be free, cannot occur by necessity. 'Therefore it is necessary that something exist in the future without necessity.' Obviously we need to analyze the term 'necessity'. Usually, Anselm notes, when we hear the word we think of some kind of force coercing or prohibiting something. But that is

certainly not the only meaning of the word. We say, for example, that ‘it is necessary that God be immortal and it is necessary that God not be unjust’, but we certainly do not intend to say that there is some power causing Him to be immortal or prohibiting Him from being unjust. Rather we are saying that God’s nature is such that nothing could interfere with His immortality or His justice. So we need to recognize that there are many meanings of ‘necessity’. What sort of necessity is entailed by divine foreknowledge? When we say that something is foreknown we are saying that it will indeed happen in the future, since knowledge entails the truth of what is known. ‘So when I say

that if God foreknows something, it is necessary that that should exist in the future, it is really the same as if I had said “If it will be, necessarily it will be.” But this necessity does not compel or prohibit anything to be or not to be.’ If we posit that it is the case that x, then by necessity it is the case that x, ‘but this necessity follows upon (*sequitur*) the positing of the thing, it does not precede it. It means the same as if we were to say, “What will be, by necessity will be”. This necessity signifies nothing else than that if something will be, it cannot at the same time not be.’

There are simply two different meanings of ‘necessity’ at work here. There is the sort of necessity

which involves some compelling power or natural determinism and which conflicts with free will. For Anselm, unlike for Augustine, this includes the necessity which would follow if a created agent had only one, God-given, motivating desire such that he never had the option to reject justice. But there is also the logical necessity entailed by the positing of a situation. Boethius called it a ‘conditional’ necessity. Anselm’s analysis is very similar to, but not quite the same as, Boethius’s due to a difference in what each allows as the ‘positing of a situation’ in the context of the freedom/foreknowledge discussion. Anselm speaks of this necessity as ‘following’, and so we

can use the term ‘consequent’ for Anselm’s understanding of this sort of necessity.

By way of example he notes that it is not necessary that a piece of wood be white. That is, there are no compelling causes or natural necessity which make it white. It may not be white. Suppose we paint it white so that at some point in time it is true that ‘The wood is white’. It is always and immutably necessary that ‘The white wood is white’, but before it was white there was no necessity of its being white. It might well not have been white. This is true even when it is white. Likewise we can say of something which happens in the future, but without any compelling necessity, that it is not necessary

that it should happen in the future. It might happen or it might not. None the less, if  $x$  happens in the future, necessarily  $x$  happens in the future. So if  $x$  is the case, but not through any compelling necessity, there is just no contradiction between saying that things could have been otherwise than  $x$ , but that  $x$  is the case by a consequent necessity.

And the same can be said for actions. If an action will happen in the future, then it will happen in the future by consequent necessity. But this consequent necessity does not rule out that, before it was done, that same action might or might not have occurred. And so we can say that whatever the free will actually

wills, ‘it is both able and not able not to will it, and it is necessary that it should will it. Before it wills it is able not to will it, because it is free. But once it wills it, it is not able not to will it, rather it is necessary that it should will it, because it is impossible that it should at one and the same time both will and not will the same thing.’ Again, there just is no contradiction between robust freedom and consequent necessity. Were someone to insist that freedom must eschew all necessity, then no one could ever be free, since Anselm is surely right to note that at the time you choose x, by choosing x you make it impossible that you not choose x. God’s eternal knowledge of

what will happen in the future does entail that the future event happens ‘by necessity’. But it is not the sort of necessity which compels. It is a consequent necessity. And therefore there is no contradiction with saying that future free choices occur by necessity, and saying that before they were made they might or might not have occurred. They are free in the libertarian sense.

But is this not all a bit too fast? William Hasker argues that even if we show that divine foreknowledge does not entail causal determination, that is insufficient to reconcile freedom and foreknowledge. In speaking of the claim that ascribing to God an eternal way of knowing solves the

dilemma, Hasker writes that, ‘... causal determination is not the issue. Causal determinism is inimical to freedom because it eliminates alternative possibilities for the action that is taken. But alternative possibilities can be eliminated in other ways as well, not least by the fact that the act to be done already exists—and exists, let us recall, in its full concrete particularity—in eternity.’ Hasker’s criticism, and this is one made frequently by contemporary philosophers of religion, is that the very fixity of God’s eternal knowledge rules out alternative possibilities, and hence libertarian freedom. Libertarian freedom could be possible, writes Hasker, only if the following

condition could be satisfied, '*there are future actions of my own which timelessly exist in the divine eternity which are such that it is in my power, now, to bring about that those actions do not exist in eternity* [Hasker's italics].' Of course this condition cannot be met, and so, Hasker concludes, even if divine foreknowledge is understood, not as foreknowledge, but as eternal knowledge, so long as the knowledge entails necessity the problem remains. And simply pointing out that the necessity involved is not causal determinism does not solve it.

A great deal more needs to be said about the manner of divine knowledge. Anselm has insisted

that the necessity involved is only a consequent necessity, the logical necessity that follows upon the supposition of a given situation, and so does not conflict with libertarian freedom. But in this context what does it mean to posit a certain situation, in this case the making of a free choice? In the previous chapter I looked quickly at two non-Anselmian theories which propose to explain how God could have foreknowledge of future events. One, presented as a plausible interpretation of Augustine's and Boethius's position, is that God knows future 'free' choices because He knows that He will cause them. The other was the Molinist view that God foreknows free choices due to

knowing the pre-existent counterfactuals of freedom and His own intentions. On the question of Anselm's understanding of what it means to 'posit a free choice' a glance at these two theories will help to clarify by way of contrast.

The non-four-dimensionalist reading of Augustine and Boethius suggests that God knows future choices because He knows He will cause them. The bare logical necessity of 'If A (some agent) chooses x at t (some time in the future), necessarily A chooses x at t' does not entail any determination. However, the proposed causal story behind God's knowing that 'A chooses x at t' certainly does. The truth of 'A

chooses x at t' is determined by God's causal act. So, on this interpretation of Augustine and Boethius, that a certain choice is 'posited' entails that God will cause that choice. Consequent necessity does rule out alternative possibilities in a way. If it is the case that A chooses x, it is impossible that it not be the case that A chooses x. And if this necessity follows upon the supposition of a causally determined choice, then the lack of alternative possibilities is traceable to God's causal activity. Both aspects of libertarian freedom, alternative possibilities and self-causation, are ruled out.

Molinism proposes that God knows the future by knowing the

truths of middle knowledge, combined with knowing His own intentions. The truth conditions for ‘A chooses x at t’, consist in the truth of the counterfactual of freedom, ‘In (possible situation) S at t A would choose x’ and God’s knowing that He will create A and actualize situation S at t. The true counterfactual of freedom is simply a brute phenomenon. It has always existed, and its existence is independent of God and of the agent which is its subject. So relative to divine foreknowledge, the ‘positing the choice’, that is the truth of ‘A chooses x at t’, on which the consequent necessity follows, depends in part on God and in part on the true counterfactual.

What it does not depend on is the actual choice of the actual agent. Again, consequent necessity does, in away, rule out options. So at time  $t$ , when  $A$  actually comes to choose  $x$ ,  $A$  could not possibly not have chosen  $x$ . And, in the Molinist account, the necessity by which  $A$  chooses  $x$ , even if it is not a compelling or natural necessity, none the less follows upon pre-existent phenomena which are not in the agent's control. As William Hasker suggests, this does seem to conflict with libertarian freedom.

Anselm's position is very different. Relative to free choice, when he says that the consequent necessity follows upon the supposition of the situation, in this

case a free choice, what he means by ‘the situation’ is the *actual choice of the actual agent*. God is eternal. All of time and all the objects and events in time are *immediately* present to Him. (I shall attempt to explain and defend Anselm’s position on this below.) It is not that God knows the future through knowing what He Himself will cause, or through deducing it by adding His own intentions to His middle knowledge. Time is tenseless. What to any given temporal perceiver at any given time is past, present, and future is all just *there*, equally real and directly present to God. God knows what is the case by ‘seeing’ what is the case.

This is not to say that He is just a

passive spectator. Traditional, classical theism insists that God is the cause of all that has ontological status. ‘Seeing’ here stands for God’s immediate knowledge which includes His causing all real existents. For Augustine and Boethius this meant that literally everything that happens happens because God wills it. Augustine says that his view does not entail that God causes evil choices, but, as explained in Chapter 2, he holds that God *efficiently* causes the good choices, and *deficiently* causes the evil ones. Nothing happens that is not willed by God. Anselm, however, as explained in Chapter 6, reconciles the claim that God is the *Creator omnium*

with the position that it is really up to the agent what choice he will make. And he does this in *De concordia* as part of his consideration of divine foreknowledge. He holds that God provides all the elements of the choice: the will and its conflicting motivations. All the created agent contributes is the ‘winning out’ of one motive over another. This is not some new ‘thing’ at all. In the good choice, where the motive for justice wins out, all that is good comes from God, and there is nothing there not from God. In the bad choice, the motive for justice is overthrown by the excessive desire for benefits. It is the agent himself who does the

‘overthrowing’, and the evil of the bad choice is just the absence of the justice that ought to be there. The good in the evil choice comes from God, the evil comes from the agent. But whether the agent chooses good or evil, the choice is ‘from himself’ since in either case he could have done otherwise.

And so, while all that has being is sustained by God, none the less He eternally knows what an agent chooses because He ‘sees’ the agent choose it. As I noted in Chapter 6, Anselm’s position does entail that created agents can have a causal impact on God. Anselm is willing to accept this radical consequence, since the alternative is that God is the cause of sin, which is logically impossible, in his

view. The consequent necessity which follows upon divine knowledge is then entirely consistent with libertarian free will. Anselm writes: ‘... although it is necessary that whatever is foreknown and predestined [‘predestination’ for Anselm consists in God’s causing what He causes, and *permitting* what He does not cause] should happen, nevertheless these foreknown and predestined things do not result from any necessity which precedes the event (*rem*) and makes it happen, but rather from [the necessity] which follows upon the event (*rem sequitur*), as we said above.’

In the somewhat different context of discussing Christ’s

freedom in *Cur deus homo* Anselm makes a similar point. Book 2, Chapter 16 sets up an interesting dilemma. Anselm has argued that Christ can be born of the Virgin Mary because she is pure, and she is pure because she has been cleansed of sin by her belief in the future event of Christ's saving sacrifice. But then, as the interlocutor, Boso, points out, Christ's death seems to happen as a matter of necessity, since it is the future fact of His death that allows for His birth of the Virgin. Were He not to die, He could never have been born. Earlier, in Book 2, Chapter 10, Anselm had maintained that there is a sort of necessity in Christ's choices, in that, while in terms of

power He could, for example, tell a lie, He could not will to lie. (I discuss divine freedom in Chapter 10.) But since His will is absolutely *a se*, this necessity does not conflict with His freedom. In Chapter 16 Anselm first suggests that this earlier point answers Boso's problem. Christ dies by His own choice and so, although He cannot will not to die, He sacrifices Himself freely. But Boso, rightly, insists that the problem is more serious. In order for Christ to be born, Mary's belief in Christ's choice to die must be true. But this means that, 'if He was able not to die, He was able to make what was true not be true'. That, of course, is impossible, and so it seems that Christ must die as

a necessity; not just a necessity born of His own divine nature, but one rooted in the fixity of the past. How, then, can He be free?

But Boso has the order of dependence backwards. Anselm explains that it is not the fact that Mary's belief is true which somehow causes the event of Christ's choice to die. It is Christ's choice to die which causes the truth of Mary's belief. It is 'necessary' that Christ die, but 'the necessity does not cause the event to exist, rather the existence of the event causes the necessity to exist' (*necessitas non cogit rem esse, sed esse rei facit necessitatem esse*). Anselm goes on to explain the distinction, which he will employ again in the later *De concordia*,

between preceding, compelling, necessity, and consequent necessity. 'For certainly there is a preceding necessity which is the cause of some thing/event (*rem*) being the case, and there is a consequent necessity, which the thing/event causes.' What makes this case especially noteworthy is that here there is no question of the temporally preceding true belief being the efficient cause of the foreknown event. One may wonder whether or not divine foreknowledge somehow makes the foreknown event happen, as Augustine and Boethius suggest, but certainly the foreknowledge of a creature, like the Virgin Mary, would not do so. It is the occurring of the event which is the

causally originating source of Mary having a true belief.

*[There may be causally important factors which fall logically in between Christ's sacrifice and Mary's coming to believe, such as the testimony of the prophets and the words of God's messenger to her, but in Anselm's view it is clear that the fact of the event is a cause of the belief.]*

This is a case of genuine backwards causation in that a later temporal event is the cause of an earlier temporal event, but in a tenseless universe where God acts upon all of time in one eternal act, that is to be expected.

The necessity entailed in divine knowledge of free choice is a consequent necessity which follows upon the event. It is not

ultimately grounded in God's knowledge of what He Himself will cause, nor in some pre-existent proposition which takes that event as its subject. It is the event itself which is the source of the consequent necessity. True, God is the cause of the existence of all the elements involved in the choice, but which option 'wins out' in a morally significant choice is up to the created agent. It is the fact that the agent actually chooses what he chooses that produces God's knowledge of the choice, and so the consequent necessity involved in divine knowledge is ultimately produced by the agent making the choice. Not only is the necessity not causally determining, it is, though Anselm does not use

the term, ‘self-imposed’. If A freely chooses x, A himself makes it consequently necessary that he freely chooses x. A himself makes it the case that he cannot possibly choose otherwise than x, simply by choosing x. Thus the necessity in question does not interfere at all with the self-causal nature (aseity) of the choice, since the necessity comes from the free choice of the agent. It is a matter of logical necessity that if A chooses x, A chooses x, so if this sort of non-determining *and self-imposed* necessity conflicts with libertarian freedom then there is no libertarian freedom. But it seems absurd to suppose that the necessity and the closing off of options which result from the

agent actually choosing could in any way undermine libertarian freedom. And since God's eternal knowledge, which is foreknowledge from our perspective, entails only this sort of consequent necessity, there is no conflict between divine (fore)knowledge and the future free choices of created agents.

[See my '*The Necessity of the Present and Anselm's Eternalist Response to the Problem of Theological Fatalism*', *Religious Studies* 43 (2007), 25–47.]

Note that the Molinist cannot make use of this point about self-imposed necessity. For the Molinist it is not the actual choice of the free agent that grounds the fact that the agent cannot choose

otherwise than as God foreknows he will choose. The proposition exists before (perhaps temporally and at least logically) God decides to actualize the agent, and there are true counterfactuals of freedom for agents who are never actualized. And of course if, as Augustine and Boethius seem to hold, God's foreknowledge derives entirely from knowledge of His own intentions to cause all that happens, either efficiently or deficiently, then the necessity involved in divine foreknowledge does not originate with the created agent.

It is true that Anselm's position entails that God 'learns' from us. He knows what we choose, *because* we choose it. There is no

way around this conclusion, given Anselm's commitment to libertarian freedom, which grants to created agents a measure, however small, of primary causality and genuine aseity. Some philosophers find this unacceptable, arguing that God's nature is such that He cannot possibly be 'passive' with regard to, or in any way affected by, His creation. But Anselm can respond, as I noted in discussing Molinism in the previous chapter, that, if indeed the existence of free creatures who can affect God's knowledge is a limitation on Him, it is one He has freely chosen to impose upon Himself. Moreover, God's choice to make creatures who can function as primary

agents is motivated by God's love and goodness, the desire to make the most adequate reflection of Himself. To argue that God *could not* create genuinely free agents, since that would conflict with His nature, seems to imply an equally serious limitation on divine omnipotence.

Anselm's view does not impose as radical a limitation on the divine nature as the Molinist's proposal of a set of counterfactuals of freedom which exist independently of God and set the parameters within which He can act. And the philosophers who hold that absolutely all that happens is the immediate result of God's causal knowledge are forced to grant that, in the final

analysis, God is the cause of sin. On Anselm's very plausible account of what sin is, that consequence is logically impossible. Within the framework of traditional, classical theism the conclusion that God 'learns' from us is *prima-facie* uncomfortable. But all the analyses of the relationship of God's power and knowledge to creaturely freedom have their difficulties. The thesis that God might have chosen to make creatures who could affect Him does not shake the foundations of traditional, classical theism as much as do the two theories under discussion here which attempt to avoid that conclusion.

Positing counterfactuals of freedom, as do

the Molinists, means God is limited by something which exists independently of Him. Saying that God simply causes everything including sin cannot be squared with ascribing absolute goodness and justice to Him.

*[As I noted in Ch. 5, Anselm will not accept the response that God needs all the evil in order to achieve His purposes, since that would be to impute weakness to Him (*De casu diaboli* 25).]*

Thus both of these alternatives to Anselm's position seem much more destructive of traditional, classical theism.

## ANSELM ON TIME

Now it is true that Anselm's reconciliation of freedom and

divine foreknowledge works only on a certain understanding of time and eternity. If God's knowledge is dependent upon the actual choices of free created agents, then He can know those choices only if they actually exist. If God knows future free choices, then the future is 'present' to God. And if God knows all things directly, and He knows all the past, present, and future equally, then all of time must be equally actual. Only the four-dimensionalist theory of time can be reconciled with Anselm's claims about God's power and knowledge. Unlike Augustine and Boethius, Anselm presents a clear and consistent four-dimensionalism. Here it will be helpful to spell out Anselm's

understanding of the nature of time and eternity in general, and then show how he uses his analysis to solve the dilemma of foreknowledge and freedom.

Anselm's work on the issue begins well before his discussion of freedom and foreknowledge in *De concordia*, the last of his completed philosophical works. As perfect, God must be eternal. That this solves the dilemma of freedom and foreknowledge is a happy consequence of a more fundamental metaphysical position. In his first philosophical treatise, the *Monologion*, where he attempts to show which attributes reason must ascribe to the Highest Being, he devotes several chapters to God's relationship to time. In

Chapter 14 he argues the traditional, classical theist point that God must be immediately present to all that exists in order for it to exist. What does ‘present’ mean here? Anselm is working within the metaphysical framework of Augustinian Neoplatonism, and entitles the chapter ‘That it [the highest being—in translating I will often use ‘He’, although in context ‘it’ would be more literal] is in everything and through everything, and everything is from it and through it and in it.’ I have argued that Anselm subscribes to a strong doctrine of participation in which God is really immanent in His creation, and created things reflect and in some sense

genuinely share in the nature of God. At the risk of overemphasizing the Neoplatonic conception of immanence, it is possible to take creation to be ‘divine ideas’, the expression of the divine mind, immediately kept in being by God’s thought. At the same time, in good Neoplatonic fashion, Anselm balances his claims for the pervasiveness of God with the insistence that He is transcendent.

In *Monologion* 20 Anselm argues that we must say that God is in all place and time. He is careful to note that this does not mean that God may be circumscribed by some determinate place and time while His *power* reaches to all place and

time. God is simple. His power is not separable from His being. Where His power is, He is. ‘And so since [the highest being] does not exist at some determinate “somewhere” or “somewhen”, it is necessary that it exists everywhere and always, that is, in all place and time.’ God is immanent, and yet He is also transcendent, so we must recognize that He is not circumscribed by any place or time. We must say that He is in ‘no place or time’. In his typical analytic way Anselm proves this by noting that He would have to be ‘in’ either as a whole, or by parts, proposing all the possible divisions of whole and part applicable to place and time, and

showing that none of them is consistent with the nature of God.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the discussion is the question of why God cannot be wholly separate and distinct in each single time. This is what the divine situation would have to be if presentism were true. After all, the whole human being exists yesterday, and then today, and then tomorrow, so it is correct to say that he was, is, and will be. Anselm, then, if one were to try to map his theory onto contemporary metaphysics, would seem to be an endurantist with regard to objects: the temporal object is wholly present at each time that it exists. But, he continues, if we said the same of

God, ‘His life, which is nothing other than His eternity, would not exist all at once, but rather in parts, extended through the parts of time.’ This seems to suggest perdurantism with regard to events. A life which exists over time is the sum of all of its temporal parts. One might consistently be an endurantist about objects, including human persons, and a perdurantist about events, such as a person’s life. But, according to Anselm, we cannot adopt this position with regard to God. Being absolutely simple His life and His being as a person are identical. ‘But His eternity is nothing other than His very self... if His eternity has a past, present, and future, it would follow that

His very being has a past, present, and future. And what is past, is not present or future; and what is present, is not [etc.] . . . ’ The divine essence would be divided into parts, and that is not possible.

Having ruled out all the ways by which God might be in place and time, Anselm concludes that it is impossible that God should be everywhere and always, and yet we have already seen that, since He is the immediate causal source of all that exists, it is necessary that God be everywhere and always. He goes on to reconcile the apparent contradiction and show ‘How [God] is in all and in no place and time.’ In canvassing the various ways God might be in time, the impossibilities arose because we

assumed that God was subject to the laws of time and space. But the laws of time and space, by which something cannot be wholly present at different times or places 'at the same time' apply only to spatial and temporal things. God transcends these laws. In asking whether or not God is 'in' place and time, we should recognize that we must use the term in a somewhat special way when we speak of God. When we say that a spatial thing is 'here in this place' or that a temporal thing is 'present in this time (now)' we mean both that they are present to the place and time, and also that they are contained within, limited to, this place and time. It is quite right to say that God is not 'in' any time or

place if we mean to say that He is not limited and circumscribed by space and time as physical creatures are. But if by ‘in’ we mean ‘present to’ in the sense that by His sustaining causal power He is immediately sustaining each and every place and time, then we should say that He is ‘in’ all times and places, though ‘... if customary usage permitted it, it would seem better to say that He is “with” place and time rather than “in” place and time’. And in the final analysis it is better to say that He exists ‘always’ (*semper*) rather than ‘in all time’, to distinguish His mode of being from that of temporal creatures, for His eternity is ‘limitless life existing all at once, wholly and

perfectly'.

In the *Proslogion* Anselm again discusses the relationship of God to time in his unpacking of the concept, ‘that than which no greater can be conceived’. In Chapter 13 he notes what he takes to be an obvious claim. Whatever is confined by any time or place is inferior to that which is not limited by any of the laws of place or time. True, created human souls can be said to be ‘unlimited’ (*incircumspectus*) in that they are not physically limited to a single physical point in the body, and even ‘eternal’ in that they will live forever into the future. But God alone is ‘wholly everywhere at once’.

In Chapter 18 he reiterates the

central claim that God's eternity, which just is God Himself, is perfectly simple. Chapter 19 is entitled 'That He is not in place or time, but all times and places are in Him'. Here he writes,

In your eternity is there anything past, so that it does not exist now, or anything future as if it does not exist yet? It is not that you existed yesterday and will exist tomorrow, but yesterday, today and tomorrow, you exist. On the contrary, you exist neither yesterday, nor today, nor tomorrow, rather you are simply beyond all time. For yesterday, today and tomorrow are nothing other than temporal. You, however, although nothing exists without you, are not thereby in place or time, but everything is in you. Nothing contains you, but you

contain everything.

In Chapter 20 Anselm explains how God is beyond other ‘eternal’ things, that is things like human and angelic spirits which have no end. They still have a life in which the past slips away and the future is yet to come. ‘And thus you are always beyond (*ultra*) [these ‘eternal’ creatures], since you are always present “there”, or rather since it is always present to you, which for them has not yet arrived.

[*Proslogion 20, S.I p. 116, ll. 2 – 3. The point that the future ‘has not yet arrived’ for some temporal creature who will exist at that future time could sound rather unlike four-dimensionalism. If a temporal creature exists at some future time then, from the perspective of divine eternity,*

*that future time has arrived for that creature. The statement can be squared with four-dimensionalism if we take it to mean something like, ‘for us now in the eleventh (or twenty-first) century that future time has not yet arrived’.]*

And now, says Anselm in Chapter 21, we can understand what it means to talk about the ‘ages of ages’ (*saecula saeculorum*). An age of time contains all the temporal things, but ‘your eternity contains the very age of time itself’. He concludes the discussion of time in Chapter 22 by saying that temporal things do not exist ‘properly and absolutely’, in the Neoplatonic sense of having superior ontological status. What they were they are not now, and what they will be they are not yet. Only God truly exists since

‘whatever you are at any time or in any way, you are wholly and always’.

Both of these discussions of time and eternity are motivated by Anselm’s thesis that divine eternity is a far superior mode of being to temporal existence, even everlasting temporal existence. He is not here interested in the problem of freedom and foreknowledge, but his discussions in these earlier works are relevant to his solution to the dilemma in *De concordia* in that they seem clearly and consistently four-dimensionalist. One proof of this is the parallel way in which he treats times and places. He does note in *Monologion* 21 that the investigation of time and place

cannot be treated as simply identical problems, and so he discusses them separately. But he sticks with the basic claim that God, not being subject to the laws of space and time, both transcends and is present to all times and places ‘at the same time’ (*simul*). There is no doubt at all that all the places to which God is present exist equally. The proof for God’s ubiquity consists in the argument that the places could not exist were God not present to them. And exactly the same argument is made regarding time. God must be present to all times, and so Anselm must intend the obvious conclusion that all times exist equally.

In Chapters 19 and 20 of the

*Proslogion* Anselm writes that God transcends past, present, and future, but that it is all ‘contained’ in Him. ‘Contained’ is the language of Neoplatonism, emphasizing divine immanence. There is no suggestion that He simply *knows* past, present, and future. The clear import is that all of these times are equally there ‘in’ God. But in that case they are equally real. In *Proslogion* 21 he suggests an idea which may foreshadow his claim in *De concordia* that divine eternity is a sort of fifth dimension, encompassing the other four. He writes that an age of time contains all the temporal objects and events, but God’s eternity contains the very ages of time.

Were there any texts in Anselm's philosophical work which suggested any other understanding of time, then perhaps more caution would be advisable in the interpretation here, but the texts consistently point to four-dimensionalism.

This conclusion is very clear when it comes to the discussion of time and eternity as it relates to the dilemma of freedom and foreknowledge.

Anselm's solution to the problem of freedom and foreknowledge trades on the point that consequent necessity, the necessity that follows upon the positing of a situation, does not entail any sort of causal determinism. Moreover, in the

case of a free choice, the absence of options involved in consequent necessity is simply the result of the agent actually choosing one option, which renders it logically impossible that he should, in the same way at the same time, choose otherwise. In describing freely chosen sin he writes: ‘Before he wills he is able not to will, because he is free. But once he wills, he is not able not to will, but now it is necessary that he will it [sin], because it is impossible that he should at the same time will and not will the same thing.’ The consequent necessity involved in divine foreknowledge is not causally determining and it is also ‘self-imposed’ in that it comes from the actual choice of the

agent. God simply ‘sees’ the free choice made by the agent and that is how He knows it. But this claim requires a four-dimensionalist theory of time because the actual future choice must exist in order for God to ‘see’ it. In Book 1 of *De concordia* Anselm offers a clear and developed four-dimensionalist analysis of time and eternity as it relates to the question of foreknowing free choices.

In Chapter 4 of Book 1, immediately after the discussion concerning consequent necessity, he repeats Augustine’s argument from *De libero arbitrio* that it would be absurd to say that divine foreknowledge imposed some compulsion on future choices and

actions, for then one would have to say that God's own future choices and actions are not done freely since He must know what He will choose and do. But, unlike Augustine, Anselm introduces his statement of this argument with a short discussion of time and eternity.

. . . when God wills or does anything, whether it is expressed according to the immutable present (*praesentiam*), in which nothing is past or future, but everything exists 'at the same time' (*simul*) without any motion—so that we should say that it is not that He willed or *will* will, or did or will do anything, but just that He wills and does—or according to time, as when we say that He *will* will or will do what we know is not yet done—He cannot be

denied to know what He wills and does, and to foreknow what He *will* will and will do.

Here Anselm introduces an important element of the four-dimensionalist theory. There are two ways of looking at the universe. From the divine perspective everything is simply ‘there’ in eternity (‘... without any motion’ may not be the best way to phrase it, since it might suggest something frozen or static in time).

[Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann prefer to say that eternity has duration because they want to avoid the suggestion that it is ‘a static instance’ or ‘frozen instant’; ‘Eternity’, *The Journal of Philosophy* 78 (1981), 429–58, see p. 220. They do not succeed in expressing the

*concept of duration without extension, and it is key to the medieval idea of eternity that it not have any sort of extension. I argue this in 'Eternity Has No Duration', Religious Studies 30 (1994), 1 – 16.]*

And then there is the perspective of the temporal creature at a given point of time, and from that perspective some things are past, some present, and some future. It is not that we are deluded in seeing things as we do. We see the world as we were made to see it. But we make a mistake if we suppose that because we are radically limited by the laws of time and space God must be as well. The reality is that all of time exists equally, but our limitations force us to assimilate the expanse across which we exist in a piecemeal fashion.

Chapter 5 offers the most extended discussion of the relationship of time to eternity. Here Anselm reiterates the point about the eternal versus the temporal perspective. ‘For because God is not fallible, and does not see anything but what is true—whether it occurs through freedom or through necessity—what, from the human perspective (*apud hominem*) is able to be changed (*mutari potest*) before it happens, is said to be immutably “fixed” (*constituisse*) from His perspective (*apud se*).’ Of course in saying that an event ‘can be changed’ Anselm does not mean that if x happens at time t, somehow this fact can be ‘undone’ such that it is not the case that x

happens at time t. It is just logically impossible that anything should be ‘changed’ in that sense. Anselm is clear that even God cannot ‘undo’ the past.

*[Cur deus homo 2.17. It is not that God lacks some power, but rather that the ‘impossibility’ follows from His nature. And it is none the less something which He wills. He wills that truth should be immutable, since He Himself is Truth. Given four-dimensionalism God cannot ‘change’ anything, in the sense that what we call past, present, and future are all just there to Him. But being eternal allows far greater scope for His power than what could be had by any temporal being. In bringing about what He intends He has all of time immediately there before Him to work with. I argue this in ‘Anselmian Eternalism: The Presence of a Timeless God’, Faith and Philosophy 24 (2007), 3-27.]*

Anselm's point is that, from the temporal perspective, before a morally significant choice is made, there are genuinely open options. There is absolutely no causal determination, and the choice of one option over another originates with the agent. True, there is a consequent necessity, but that is a necessity which follows upon the choice.

He goes on to write:

Just as something in eternity neither was nor will be but just *is*, and nevertheless it was or will be in time without any contradiction, in the same way that which cannot change in eternity, in time at some temporal point before it happened, is shown to be changeable through

free will without any inconsistency. However, although nothing is there [in eternity] but what is present, it is not a temporal present like ours, but an eternal [present] in which all times are contained. Just as the present time contains all place and whatever is in any place, in the same way the eternal present encloses all time and whatever exists in any time. . . For eternity has its own unique simultaneity (*Habet enim aeternitas suum simul*) in which exist all the things which exist at the same place or time, and whatever exists in the different places and times.

But is it not contradictory to claim that the same object or event can be both mutable (i.e. the sort of thing that might turn out one way or another) and immutable?

‘Obviously there is not any more opposition between being mutable in time and immutable in eternity than there is between not existing at some time, but existing always in eternity, or between having been or going to be in the future according to time, and not having been or going to be in the future in eternity.’ And so specifically with regard to future free choices:

I do not say that my action tomorrow does not exist in any time, but rather I deny that it exists *today*, which nevertheless exists always in eternity. And when we deny that something was or will be there, which in time was or will be, we do not assert that what was or will be does not exist there in any way at all, but rather we say it is not

there in a past or future mode (*modo*) which is there unceasingly in its present mode.

He concludes Chapter 5 with the remark, ‘I think it is sufficiently clear from the things I have said that divine foreknowledge and free will are by no means mutually inconsistent. This is due to the strength of eternity which encloses all time and whatever exists in any time.’

Throughout this discussion the striking thing is that Anselm consistently describes things and events which exist in time as always there and present to God. It is not that propositions about them are known by God, or that God knows them through knowing what He Himself intends

to do. The things and events *themselves* exist in divine eternity. There are two ways of looking at exactly the same phenomena. There is our temporal perspective, relative to each fleeting moment from which our past is gone and our future has not yet come to be. And then there is the divine perspective, which sees all as equally real. And of course it is the divine perspective which sees reality as it is—which, in fact, pervades and sustains reality as the cause of its being. Anselm's description of divine eternity as a fifth dimension makes this very evident. 'Just as the present time contains all place and whatever is in any place, in the same way the eternal present encloses all time

and whatever exists in any time.' All the places which exist at a given time exist equally. Anselm is saying, then, that all places and *all times* exist equally within divine eternity. He is the first clear and consistent four-dimensionalist.

In solving the dilemma of freedom and foreknowledge in *De concordia*, Anselm is working with a set of important core beliefs. He has argued for genuine libertarian freedom, thus it cannot be that God knows the future by knowing determining causes in the present, or by knowing His own causal intentions. This does entail that God cannot completely control, and is even to some extent affected by, His free creatures. But since the power of God is made

manifest in His creation, His making free agents to whom He imparts some share, albeit small and reflected, of His aseity evidences His omnipotence. The existence of free creatures is not a sign of God's weakness but of His power.

Anselm's commitment to traditional, classical theism will not permit the Molinist move which severely limits God by positing ‘counterfactuals of freedom’ which exist as brute phenomena, independent of God and of the actual choices of actual agents. But to deny, as the Open Theists do, that God knows the future constitutes an equally radical diminution of the divinity. Anselm's solution saves freedom,

foreknowledge, and traditional, classical theism. It does require acceptance of the tenseless theory of time, and admittedly this is a difficult view to grasp conceptually.

*[I have attempted to explain and defend divine eternity and the tenseless view of time in ‘Anselmian Eternalism: The Presence of a Timeless God’.]*

But since it is not logically contradictory, Anselm will hold that we should not let our failure of imagination stand in the way of our subscribing to the view that supports the most adequate understanding of God. Accepting four-dimensionalism is a small price to pay if it allows us to retain the belief that we are free agents in

a universe created by ‘that than which nothing greater can be conceived’.

# 10: The Freedom of God

## GOD DOES THE BEST

According to Anselm, God's freedom does not entail the option to choose between good and evil or between good and better, nor does God have the 'freedom of indifference' to opt between indiscernibles. Anselm follows Augustine's Neoplatonic line that God, being the best, does the best. Augustine, as a compatibilist, did not ascribe any value to an agent's being able to choose between genuinely open options, and so it is not surprising that, while he insists that God's actions are done freely, he never suggests that God debates between alternatives.

Anselm, on the other hand, considers it absolutely crucial that created agents be able to choose between the alternatives of holding fast to the good, or rejecting it. In order for created agents to merit praise and blame, and to have the exalted metaphysical stature of images of God, they must have morally significant freedom. Some contemporary philosophers of religion take it for granted that if we human beings must have morally significant freedom in order to be valuable and praiseworthy or blameworthy, then God must have it, too, if He is to be morally good and praiseworthy. On the Anselmian understanding this is a mistake

born of overly anthropomorphizing God. It is impossible that the God of traditional, classical theism could sin, or even do less than the best. In this chapter I shall look at the reasons why Anselm's God must do the best, and how Anselm reconciles this point with his claim that God is free—and free under the same definition of 'freedom' which applies to created agents. And then I shall explain and defend his position that even with regard to creation ours is the best, and hence the only, world God can actualize.

Anselm, as noted in Chapter 5, finds it logically impossible that God should cause sin. To sin, he explains in *De libertate arbitrii* 8,

is to will what God wills that one should not will. Thus God cannot cause anyone to sin. Anselm does not say it explicitly here, probably because he would have found it so obvious as to go without saying, but this argument entails that God Himself cannot sin. One would have to propose a very different conception of sin if one were to argue that God could have morally significant freedom. Moreover one would have to accept an analysis of the nature of divinity which sees God as far different from, and lesser than, the God of traditional, classical theism.

In much contemporary philosophy of religion, God's goodness is defined as His conformity to a moral order. If He

is perfectly good, or necessarily good, it is because He conforms perfectly or as a matter of necessity to this moral order. If God is free, then perhaps, various philosophers surmise, He can choose whether or not to conform to the moral order. Or perhaps He must conform, but still can choose between doing the good and doing the even better. And the moral order is often assumed to be a set of necessary principles existing independently of God. The traditional, classical theist, such as Augustine or Anselm or Aquinas, sees this contemporary view as a denial of divine aseity, since it holds that in order to be good God must conform to something outside Himself. And so it is a

terrible diminution of the status of God. Anselm's God does not conform to any external and independent order of value or morality. God is the absolute standard of moral and metaphysical good. Anselm's first proof for God at the beginning of the *Monologion* is a version of the standard Platonic argument that our recognition of disparate goods entails that there is a supreme Good which all the different lesser goods reflect and participate in. And this is God. He goes on in *Monologion* 15 to say that this highest Good must be, 'living, wise, powerful and all-powerful, true, just, beautiful, eternal, and whatever of the same sort it is absolutely better to be than not to

be'. Given Anselm's connection between freedom and justice, our main focus here is on how God can be just. He says in *Monologion* 16 that it seems that all things that are just are so through participation in Justice. But then if we say that God is just, we seem to suggest that He is what He is *per aliud* and not *per se*. And that is clearly wrong. He concludes that if God exists absolutely *per se*, and He is just, then He must Himself be that very justice through which He is just. The just man *has* justice, but God *is* Justice.

What this means becomes clear in Anselm's discussion of rightness and justice and truth in *De Veritate*—the discussion that defined the terms for the dialogue

on freedom, *De libertate arbitrii*, and the dialogue on the choice to sin, *De casu diaboli*. In the earlier chapters of *De Veritate* Anselm lists various instances of truth: the truth of a proposition; the truth of an opinion; the truth of the will, etc. He argues that all these truths exhibit a sort of ‘rightness’ (*rectitudo*), which consists in being as they ought (*debent*) to be or doing as they ought to do. The term *debeo* is important here, because it connotes owing, having an obligation. We must be careful, then, when we ascribe truth and rightness to God. Anselm continues: ‘The Highest Truth [God] is therefore not rightness because it owes (*debet*) anything. Everything is obligated towards

(*debent*) It, but It does not owe anything to anything (*nulli quicquam debet*). . . this Rightness [God] is the cause of all other truth and rightness, and nothing is the cause of it. . . ’ Certainly it is as it ‘ought’ to be, but not in the sense that it must conform to anything outside itself. It is the standard of rightness against which the created universe is measured.

In Chapter 12 of *De Veritate* Anselm offers his definition of ‘justice’ which is so crucial in understanding his doctrine of free will: ‘Justice is rightness of will kept for its own sake.’ But, asks Anselm, can this definition be properly applied to God? It would seem not. For one thing, the

definition suggests that there is a distinction between a will and its rightness. Anselm insists in the later dialogues that there most certainly is a distinction in the *created* will, since the created will can remain even if it loses its rightness. But given the divine simplicity, God's rightness and His will are identical. None the less, as the student responds, we can use the proposed definition of ‘justice’ correctly of God. He says

just as we talk about the power of the divinity, or the divine power or the powerful divinity, even though in divinity, the power is not some thing other than the divinity; in the same way it is not incorrect if we should say in this case rightness of will or voluntary rightness or right

will. Truly if we say that [God's] rightness is kept for its own sake, it seems we could not say it more appropriately of any other instance of rightness (*nulla alia rectitudine*). For certainly, He does not 'keep' anything else but Himself, nor through anything else, but just through Himself, and therefore not for the sake of anything else, but for His own sake.

God's will, which is identical with His other attributes, is the standard for all 'rightness' and as such it is Rightness *per se*. And of course God wills that He should be as He is. So God does indeed keep rightness of will for its own sake, and this act of justice is simply identical with the divine nature. It is incoherent to suppose

that God, who exists necessarily, immutably, and eternally, could somehow fall away from the rightness which is His nature. God is perfectly just, and the absolute standard for all justice, as a matter of necessity. But is He free?

In Chapter 1 of *De libertate arbitrii*, the dialogue which follows *De Veritate*, Anselm begins to work towards a definition of ‘free will’ by noting at the outset that one common definition must be ruled out. ‘Free will’ cannot be defined as the ability to sin or not to sin, for then it could not be ascribed to the good angels in their present condition, since they can no longer sin. Nor could it be applied to God, who not only cannot sin,

but who is Justice *per se*. So if that were the proper definition, ‘neither God nor these angels who are not able to sin would have free will, which is wicked (*nefas*) to say’. Anselm does not explain why it would be wicked, but it seems safe to assume that he sees the ascription of freedom to God as an entailment of the position that the Christian God is a personal, rational agent who knows and cares for the individuals in the world He has made and who acts providentially in history. And, for Anselm, the contrary of a free act is one which is necessitated in the sense of compelled, where ‘compulsion’ includes causal necessitation by the agent’s motives and desires which have

their source outside of himself. Of course God's omnipotence and aseity cannot be compelled to act.

Could it be, suggests the student interlocutor, that we ought to allow the definition which entails the ability to sin when it comes to defining 'free will' for human beings, but use a different definition when speaking of God and the good angels? Anselm responds that since we use the same word we ought to be able to arrive at a single definition which covers all instances. He notes that the will which cannot fall away from rightness is actually more free than the will which can, and concludes that the power to sin, 'is neither freedom nor a part of freedom'. Rather, the meaning of

freedom should be derived from its purpose, which is to hold fast to justice. Thus the proper definition of ‘free will’ is, ‘the power for keeping rightness of will for the sake of that rightness itself. In Chapter 4 I argued that according to Anselm the *created* agent must have the ability to sin or not to sin in order to be free in the defined sense. This is because everything that has genuine ontological status relevant to the created agent and his choice is caused by God. The agent himself, his will as a faculty, and the motives which move him are all from God. In *De casu diaboli*, Chapter 14, Anselm notes that if the created agent were made desiring only rightness he would

inevitably choose it, but his ‘choice’, like that of the horse and the dog who will rightly by nature, would be necessitated. The cause of the ‘choice’ would be the God-given desire for rightness which the created agent had to follow, and hence the originating cause of the choice is God. The created agent would have no determining role to play.

For the keeping of rightness to be within the power of the agent, as Anselm’s definition of ‘free will’ entails, it must be an act which originates within the agent himself. God sees to it that the rational, created agent has this power when He provides two motives which can come in conflict. God gives both the desire

for rightness of will or justice, that is, the innate desire to choose benefits in accordance with God's will, and also the desire for benefits *simpliciter*, a desire which will inevitably exceed what is right if not held in check by the desire for justice. Possessed of conflicting desires the rational, created agent chooses one over the other *on its own*. And thus, if it should hold fast to the good, it does so through its own power. The created agent would not have free will, the power to keep justice, if it did not also have the power to throw it away. But the reason why the created agent must confront open options simply does not apply to God. God exists *a se*. All that He is is from Himself.

Whatever He does He does through His own power.

The standard libertarian analysis of freedom entails two criteria. The agent must confront open options; and the choice must somehow be from the agent himself. Both of these criteria apply to the created agent, on Anselm's analysis, but they are ordered in a hierarchy of importance. The open options must be there in order to permit the creature a measure of *aseity*. But it is the *aseity* which is the more valuable element. It is in reflecting, in however diminished a way, the divine independence, when we choose justice on our own, that we are true *imagines dei*. God exists *a se*, and therefore

open options are irrelevant to divine freedom.

The extended discussion of created freedom in *De libertate arbitrii* and *De casu diaboli* should suffice to make the case that God does not have or need open options. Anselm revisits the issue, focusing on divine freedom, in the somewhat later *Cur deus homo*. In this dialogue Anselm sets himself the task—a task, it should be noted, which almost every intellectual in Christendom before or since considers wildly over-optimistic—of proving, ‘by necessary reasons’ and setting aside what we have learned through Scripture, that God ‘had to’ become Incarnate and die to save man from his sins. The

non-Christian raises the point that the Christian ascribes to God what *prima facie* looks to be most unseemly behavior. God takes on a human body with all that that entails, and is even said to be been born of a woman! What bizarre behavior to attribute to that than which no greater can be conceived! Surely, in His omnipotence, He could have saved mankind without so much biological mess, perhaps simply by divine fiat.

Anselm feels the force of the criticism, and so he sets out to prove that it was *necessary* that mankind be saved by the sacrificial death of the God-man. It is most appropriate because it ‘could not be done in any other way’. In

setting out his method he explains that he intends to weigh his arguments thus: ‘Just as for God impossibility (*impossibilitas*) follows upon [the ascription of] the smallest inappropriateness (*inconveniens*), in the same way the smallest reason entails necessity (*comitatur necessitas*), unless it is outweighed by a greater.’ And so in the very statement of the problem and the method to be used to solve it Anselm embraces the view that God simply ‘must’ do the best, and even allows the use of the term ‘necessity’ to apply to God’s actions.

Boso, Anselm’s student and interlocutor in *Cur deus homo*, accedes to this method, but finds,

as the argument develops, that he is concerned at the use of the term ‘necessary’ regarding divine actions. In Book 2, Chapter 4, Anselm and his student agree that it is ‘necessary’ that God should finish the work He began in creating human beings. But then, says Boso in Chapter 5, it seems that God is forced to save man by the necessity of avoiding doing anything unfitting, and doesn’t this mean He is more concerned with Himself than with us? Why should we thank Him if He is doing what He does for Himself? And how can we say that we owe our salvation to His grace, if He saves us as a matter of necessity? Anselm responds that certainly, if someone is *forced* to

render some benefit, they do not deserve our gratitude. But, of course, the necessity in question with divine action is not any compulsion or prohibition. ‘Certainly that necessity is nothing other than the immutability of His honor, which He has from Himself and not from some other (*quam a se ipso et non ab alio habet*), and therefore it is called “necessity” improperly.’ Still, Anselm allows the term, ‘Nevertheless let us say that it is necessary. . .’ (*Dicamus tamen quia necesse est...*). As he made clear in talking about created freedom, the key criterion is aseity. The necessity which interferes with freedom is a necessity of which the origin is ultimately

something outside the agent, and thus whatever qualified necessity can be properly attributed to God is not the sort that could infringe upon the divine freedom.

The point is reiterated in Chapter 10 of Book 2. Anselm explains that, while Christ had the literal, physical power to do a sinful deed, He could not possibly will to sin. But then, responds Boso,

If He was not able to sin because, as you say, He will not be able to *will* to sin, then He preserves justice by necessity. So He will not be just through free will. Why then is any gratitude owed to Him? Don't we usually say that God made angels and men capable of sin because, since they are capable of

abandoning justice, if they preserve it through free will, they merit gratitude and praise, which would not be owed to them if they were just out of necessity.

Boso's question, echoed in contemporary philosophy of religion, is this: if open options are required for morally significant freedom and praise and blame in the case of created agents, then doesn't it follow that the same is true of God? Anselm's response is, 'No'. Again, the key is aseity. God, unlike created agents, does not need options to ground His aseity. 'The angels are not to be praised for their justice because they were able to sin, but rather on account of the fact that in a way they have it *from themselves* [my]

italics] that they are [now] not able to sin, in which they are to some extent like God, who has whatever He has from Himself.' But, asks Boso, since the subject here is Christ, the God-man, it is clear that there can be a human being incapable of sin, yet free and praiseworthy. Why, then, did God not make the angels and the original human beings such that they were not able to sin, and yet were praiseworthy?

[*Ibid.*, p. 108, ll. 15 — 17. Boso's question here is similar to a point made by Theodore Guleserian, 'Divine Freedom and the Problem of Evil', *Faith and Philosophy* 3 (2000), 348—66. If God's goodness does not require options, why say that created freedom does? Guleserian writes: '... on the assumption that it is really possible for a divine being to have

*moral and factual beliefs that metaphysically necessitate its moral volitions, there seems to be no reason to suppose that the same may not be true of a creature ...' (351). Such a creature, he argues, might not be 'free' by some standard, contemporary definitions, but it, like God, would have an essentially perfect will.]*

'Do you understand what you're saying?', asks Anselm. Obviously, only a man who is also God could possess the sort of aseity to be *essentially* incapable of sin, yet free and praiseworthy.

Regarding the choice of a created agent, were it the case that motivation consists in a single desire which inexorably leads to a given choice, the agent would not be free. The choice would be causally determined by the desire,

which originates outside of the agent, and so there would be nothing in the choice for which the agent could bear ultimate responsibility. God exists *a se*, He cannot fail to do what is best, and in *Cur deus homo*, the conclusion is that, since only a God-man can effect the completion of the work God started with the creation of man, God ‘must’ become Incarnate. God’s act of Incarnation and sacrifice is ‘necessary’ in that He could not will otherwise, and yet it is entirely free by the definition of ‘free will’ that Anselm developed in *De libertate arbitrii*.

[Anselm’s analysis of divine freedom prefigures that suggested by Edward Wierenga. Since God exists necessarily,

*nothing outside of His own nature could determine Him to choose, and thus, although He must choose the best, He is free in a way which ought to satisfy libertarians; ‘The Freedom of God’, *Faith and Philosophy* 19 (2002), 425–36. Wes Morrison responds that the libertarian is unlikely to be satisfied; ‘Is God Free? Reply to Wierenga’, *Faith and Philosophy* 23 (2006), 93 – 8. His argument is that if we hypothesize a finite agent, Bonnie Chance, who comes into being uncaused with desires and motives making her always choose the best, we would not intuit that she has freedom enough to satisfy libertarians. And so the thesis that God is uncaused cannot be invoked to reconcile God’s freedom with His perfect goodness. Morrison does note, and he might have been speaking for Anselm here, that some philosophers might say that an uncaused, finite being is a metaphysical impossibility and so our intuitions regarding such a ‘thing’ are not very helpful. He also notes that if one adopts the doctrine of divine simplicity,*

*then there is a relevant difference between God and Bonnie, in that we might say that Bonnie is ‘stuck’ with her nature and that it is her nature which causes her to choose what she chooses, not herself. If God is identical with His nature, then there is no issue of the divine nature determining the divine self. Morrison dismisses the doctrine of divine simplicity, but Anselm certainly would not.]*

This picture does entail the claim that God responds to human action. On Anselm’s account, created sin genuinely originated with the created agents. If the Incarnation is a response to that sin, then free creatures have a genuine impact on God. Some traditional, classical theists find this conclusion unbearable. But this result is unavoidable if one posits libertarian freedom for

created agents, and Anselm accepts it without qualification. But if God responds to our choices and necessarily does the best, is there a sense in which we ‘determine’ God’s actions? Anselm does not address the question, but it is not difficult to see how an Anselmian answer might go. The ‘necessity’ in question here arises entirely out of God’s perfect goodness and immutability. All the causal power in His choice to act comes from Himself. He is the absolute author of the system in which, should the human creature sin, He ‘must’ become Incarnate to save it. Perhaps on a counterfactual analysis of causation, the human sin is a cause of the divine act. Had

man not sinned God would not have ‘had’ to become Incarnate. And perhaps Anselm has to grant that there is a final causality at work. God’s love for man ‘makes’ Him act for the good of humanity. I have supposed that final causality, in the absence of open options, can be determining and hence contrary to freedom in the case of created agents, since the desires which move us towards our goals come from God. But with God, who exists absolutely *a se*, so that His desires do not come from outside Himself, such final causality cannot involve any external ‘power’ exercised over God.

Take an analogy that is very distant, but makes the relevant

point. Suppose someone has freely chosen dietary excess over a period of years until he has reached a point where gluttony is such a habit that, when confronted with the chocolate cake, he is causally determined by desire to eat it. He has reached a point where he is literally incapable of doing otherwise. On Anselm's view he is responsible for his action of eating the cake because the state of his will is the result of his own past free choices. And Anselm would not allow as a mitigation of responsibility that, 'The cake made me do it!' On a counterfactual analysis of causation, the cake is a cause, in that if it had not been there the glutton would not have eaten it.

And the cake is certainly a final cause. But the entire explanation of the inexorable force of the desire to eat it lies in the history of the glutton. Metaphorically we might talk about the cake having *power* over the glutton, but in reality all of the power lies with the glutton. Likewise, the created agent does not exercise any force to compel or prohibit God's actions. The causal power comes entirely from the immutable will of God who is so 'driven' by love that He makes human beings free and saves us when we fall.

## GOD CREATES THE BEST ACTUALIZABLE WORLD

But perhaps the evidence of *Cur deus homo* is not sufficient to

establish that God does not choose between options in other contexts. It could be argued that Anselm's view is that the 'necessity' involved in Christ's saving sacrifice follows upon God's goodness, *given the universe He has chosen to create*, but that He might have made other universes, or not created at all. Aquinas, for example, did not hold that the Incarnation was necessary in any sense at all, but he does argue that, while God might or might not have made our particular world, for any world that He does choose to create His goodness requires that He see to it that that world is perfectly ordered internally.

[*ST 1, Q. 19, art. 3. Aquinas does say that,*

*while God might have saved mankind in some other way than by becoming Incarnate, since He chose Incarnation, His suffering becomes necessary as required to achieve the end of human salvation (ST 3a, Q. 46, art. 1).]*

Thus one might interpret Anselm along similar lines as saying that God ‘must’ keep His promises regarding the fate of humanity, but that He has literally open options in other, equally important, contexts such as in His original choice to create.

There are three responses to this thesis: first, Anselm never states such a distinction. Second, there is strong textual evidence that Anselm believes our world is the only world God could make. Third, at the risk of redundancy, for Anselm there just is no

intrinsic value in open options. Aseity is what is important, and for God, unlike for creatures, aseity does not require options. The first response is a bit difficult to prove from the text, in that the citation must be to Anselm's *Opera Omnia*, with the claim that a reading of the entire corpus will not turn up the proposed distinction. I shall defend the second response with a quick look at several of the texts which seem to entail that God could not have failed to create the actual world. And, although the point about the differing requirements for divine and human aseity was made above, it will be well to spend some time on the third response. With regard to the creation of the

world many philosophers of religion, from Aquinas to the present day, have seen special value in ascribing to God the freedom to make other worlds or no world at all.

*[In Aquinas's day, one motivation for steering clear of all talk of 'necessity' in divine action stemmed from a desire to avoid the unhappy conclusions at which the Islamic Aristotelians like Avicenna and Averroes had arrived. Avicenna and Averroes posited a Perfect Being which owed a great deal—too much, from a standard Islamic perspective—to Aristotle's Unmoved Mover and Plotinus' One. It 'created' as a matter of necessity, knew only universals, and did not act in the world of time and space. In our own day the argument for positing open options for God seems to go like this: God is praiseworthy. Only free beings are praiseworthy. Only libertarian freedom can adequately ground praiseworthiness.]*

*Libertarian freedom entails open options. QED.* William Rowe assumes this conclusion in arguing that God cannot be free in any morally significant way. As perfectly good, He must do the best, choose between a number of equally good worlds than which there can be none better, or fail to exist. If He must do the best, He is not free, while if He chooses among the equally good worlds, He is free only when it doesn't matter what He does. He cannot be free and praiseworthy; Can God be Free? (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 166.]

Thus it is fruitful to ponder the question from an Anselmian perspective.

Anselm does not directly address the question of divine options with regard to creation, but his analysis in the *Monologion* of the relation of creation to the Supreme Being very strongly

suggests that ours is the only world God could choose to make. In this first of his philosophical works he is trying to show by rational argument that there must be a God, and that God must be triune. He first attempts to prove that there is a Supreme Being which is the source of all. It must create through its reason, which is its ‘expression’ (*locutio*). By the end of the work we know that this *locutio* is the Word, the Second Person of the Trinity. For our purposes it is Chapters 33 and 34 which are of interest. Here Anselm insists that God ‘speaks’ the Word and produces the created world in one act of expression.

‘In one and the same Word It [the

Highest Nature] speaks Itself and whatever it makes' (*Uno igitur eodemque verbo dicit seipsum et quaecumque fecit*). Of course God does not choose among competing options to speak or not to speak the Word which is the Second Person of the Trinity. If it is by the same act of 'speaking' that the Word is begotten and creation is made, then, since God does not have the option not to speak the Word (or to speak some different Word), the plausible conclusion is that in Anselm's view, the creation of our world is 'necessary' in the sense that it is the inevitable result of God's perfect goodness. By itself the text from the *Monologion* might not be conclusive, but given that

Anselm's analysis of freedom simply does not find open options to be valuable for God, the interpretation which sees creation as 'necessary' seems correct.

Regarding whether or not God could make a different world, Anselm does at one point seem to say that ours is in some sense a 'perfect' or at least ultimately perfectible world. In *Cur deus homo* 1.16 he notes that God sees that there is a 'perfect number' of rational beings who should enjoy everlasting beatitude, such that God 'must' see to it that that number is fulfilled. Further, '... if the perfection of the world of creatures is to be understood to be not so much in the number of individuals as in the number of

natures, then it is necessary that human nature was made either to complete that perfection or else to exceed it, which we dare not say of the nature of the smallest worm'. The implication is that a sort of perfection is possible to the world and that it consists in having the 'perfect number' of created natures. This text is consistent with interpreting Anselm as saying that God 'must' order things properly in our world, but that He might have made other worlds or no world at all. However, Anselm does not suggest that the perfection in question is relative to our particular world, as opposed to other possible worlds, but speaks rather of 'the [my italics] world of creatures'.

It is also worth noting that, while Augustine consistently insists that God creates by a free act of will, he, too, seems to hold that divine goodness must express itself in making our actual world. (This might seem the logical consequence of Augustine's compatibilism, but see the discussion of Aquinas below.) Though Anselm departs from Augustine significantly on the issue of created freedom, he follows him closely in many points having to do with the nature of God and creation. By and large 'Augustinian until proven otherwise' is a sound principle in interpreting Anselm's views.

Thus we have good reason to take it that Anselm's point in *Cur*

*deus homo* that God's freedom does not require choosing between open options is intended to apply to any divine act, not just to actions relative to a given world. Rather, divine freedom is entirely consistent with God doing the best as an inevitability of His nature. Is ours, then, 'the best of all possible worlds'? Anselm does not explicitly address the question, but I take it he would likely respond, 'Not exactly'. If created agents have libertarian freedom, then the state of the world is partially up to us. Clearly we do not always do the best. We sin. And in Anselm's world sin really ought not to happen. God can bring about the best results consistent with our choices, but it

is not clear that in Anselm's view this entails the best possible world *simpliciter*. Thus it is probably better to say that God brings about the best 'actualizable' world, that is, the best world He can, taking into account created choices.

[One might argue that God could have made a better actualizable world if He had made different created agents who make better overall choices than do the agents He actually did make. However, this claim is not quite right. If the claim is that God could have foreknown which agents would behave well and ill before creating them, I argued in Ch. 9 that, on Anselm's understanding, that is simply false. God must 'wait and see' what created agents actually choose. God does in fact, according to Anselm, make the perfect number of rational agents. But it is the rational agents who make the world

better or worse relative to their free choices. So it is not God who might have made a better actualizable world. God does the best under the circumstances, and free creatures have a role in constructing the circumstances. Perhaps God might have made different rational agents, and then these other rational agents would have been responsible for the superiority or inferiority of the actualizable world? I am not sure it makes sense, on Anselm's view, to say that God could truly have made different rational creatures. God does all He does in one, eternal, and immutable act. He does what is the best, as regards His creative activity. It is difficult, then, to see how to take the suggestion that God might do other than He does.]

Given God's omniscience and omnipotence, God's plans cannot really be thwarted, but given creatures with libertarian freedom, the free choices of created agents must immutably and eternally play

a role in those plans.

*[On Anselm's view, there is a sense in which God's wishes might be thwarted, in that created agents really can do things He'd rather they didn't do. But He is never surprised or forced to backtrack. If by 'plan' we mean a sort of program for action, then God eternally incorporates our choices into His thinking and acts accordingly.]*

Now it is time to come to grips with the heart of the philosophical matter. It has seemed to many philosophers of religion, past and present, that while divine aseity is well and good, it does not equate to freedom. Contemporary libertarians, even those who subscribe to the view that God is necessarily good, almost always assume that if human beings are

not to be praised or blamed unless they choose between open options, then the same must be true for God. And often they argue that, while God cannot do something wrong, His significant options must include a better and worse. A few contemporary philosophers even suggest that divine freedom trumps divine goodness, and God might be able to sin. Anselm, of course, thinks these positions misunderstand the purpose of freedom and the relationship of God to the moral order. What freedom is *about* is being just, which is something an agent can only do from himself. But created agents only *have* a reflected justice, while God *is* the independent Justice which the

creature can only mirror. This means that our reason for praising the created agent is different from, though related to, the reason for praising God.

An earthbound example may help to drive this point home. Suppose you are a huge Elvis Presley fan. You attend a contest for Elvis impersonators and you judge some to be good and some to be bad based on how well they imitate Elvis. But suppose, now, that The King himself appears. He cannot be judged to be a good or a bad Elvis impersonator, because he is not, and cannot be, an Elvis impersonator at all. The same criteria by which we judge the Elvis impersonators good or bad cannot be applied to him, since he

cannot *imitate* Elvis. None the less these criteria are clearly related to the actual Elvis. He is the standard against which the impersonator is measured. We praise the impersonator for accurately imitating Elvis, but The King himself we praise simply for doing what he does so well. And so with God and man. The imitation of God requires that we hold fast to the good on our own, and hence requires open options. We are praiseworthy when we choose to cling to the good God has given. God Himself *is* the good, and is praiseworthy, or better ‘*worshipworthy*’, simply for being what He is.

*I point to the vast difference between the sort of praise we give our fellow*

*human beings, and the praise of worship which we owe to God in ‘Anselm on Praising a Necessarily Perfect Being’, see pp. 48–9.]*

It is just a mistake to insist upon the same criteria for praise and the same mechanics of free will with respect to God, the standard, and man, the imitator.

Many philosophers in the classical tradition, such as Aquinas, also held that God must have open options. Aquinas, though, does not hold this view as an entailment of a libertarian metaphysics of freedom in general. Rather, he judges denying open options for God, especially with regard to the creation of the world, as placing limitations on the divinity. Traditional, classical

theists never propose that God has ‘morally significant’ freedom in that He be able to sin or not to sin. This would simply be incoherent. God's nature, which encompasses all His ‘faculties’, including His will, in a simple act of being, is the absolute standard for all value. God cannot sin, nor can He do less than the best. And so the question about creation within traditional, classical theism is not: ‘Must God do the best?’ Of course He must. The question is: ‘Must God’s perfect activity result in our world?’ That is, God does the best, but is this consistent with the possibility of His having created a different world, or perhaps choosing not to create at all?

A look at Aquinas's position on human and divine freedom will provide a useful contrast to Anselm's view. In fact, Aquinas's position can plausibly be interpreted as, in some sense, the reverse of Anselm's.

[*This discussion closely follows my 'Anselm on God's Perfect Freedom', The Saint Anselm Journal 1 (2003), 1 – 8. <http://www.anselm.edu/library/SAJ/SAJindex.html> For a differing view see Kevin Staley, 'God's Personal Freedom: A Response to Katherin Rogers', The Saint Anselm Journal 1 (2003), 9–16. <http://www.anselm.edu/library/SAJ/SAJindex.html>*]J

According to Thomas, God's freedom demands open options, while created freedom does not. A good case can be made that

Aquinas is a compatibilist regarding the free will of created agents. The created agent inevitably chooses on the basis of what it intellectually considers to be preferable, and so does not have literally open options at the moment of choice.

[*ST* 1, Q. 82, art. 3 ad 2. Eleonore Stump classes Aquinas among the libertarians, although she grants that he denies the necessity of alternative possibilities. She holds that libertarianism should be expressed this way: ‘an act is free if and only if the ultimate cause of that act is the agent’s own will and intellect’; Aquinas (New York: Routledge, 2003), 305. The problem, from Anselm’s perspective, is that the will, the intellect, and everything associated with them are from God. If God has given the will and intellect such that the agent inevitably pursues one course, then the ultimate

*cause of the agent's act is God.]*

Were it confronted with two equally desirable objects it could not move at all, barring the introduction of some external cause. None the less it is free so long as it is choosing what it judges the best. But God's freedom is unlike ours. He necessarily wills His own good, and His perfect act necessarily includes the self-begetting and producing that occurs within the Trinity. He must will the best as an end, none the less the means to that end are radically open, and God is perfectly good no matter what He chooses. This means that with regard to creation God has freedom of indifference. That is, as He wills His own good, creating

our world, creating a different world, or simply not creating at all are all equally open options. And, though the possible worlds may be ranked hierarchically, all options are equally good in that none is a better expression of the divine perfection than another, since all fall infinitely short. Being perfect, God has no need of any world, and so no reason to prefer one world to another, or indeed to no world at all. Certainly God cannot make a *bad* world. He must see to it that any world He creates is perfectly ordered internally. Still, there is no such thing as a ‘perfect’ or best possible world *simpliciter*. Certainly there are better possible worlds than ours, but without a best possible, God cannot be

faulted for producing less than the best.

[Aquinas discusses issues related to divine freedom to create in *ST* 1, Questions 19 and 25. For two recent critical discussions of Aquinas's views see Norman Kretzmann, 'A General Problem of Creation', and 'A Particular Problem of Creation', in Scott MacDonald (ed.), *Being and Goodness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 208–28 and 229–49. William Rowe criticizes Aquinas's conclusion. Rowe proposes the principle that, 'if an omniscient being creates a world when there is a better world it could create, then it would be possible for there to be a being morally better than it. If Aquinas is right, that for every creatable world there is a better creatable world, then, argues Rowe, God—necessarily the most morally perfect being conceivable—does not exist (*Can God be Free?*, 89). There are many avenues of attack against this argument.

*Aquinas himself would deny the principle. God is not just another member of the moral community such that He is to be judged better or worse on the basis of the number and quality of His various good deeds. But I leave this discussion to those who are sympathetic to Aquinas's position that God has open options due to the infinite hierarchy of possible worlds. Anselm agrees with Rowe that, if there is a God, He does the best.]*

First it is worthwhile to note that the negative associations Aquinas would have had with the view that God creates 'by necessity' had not yet surfaced in European Christendom in Anselm's day. Aquinas's discussion takes place within the sometimes bitter debate over if, how, and to what extent Christian thought could embrace Aristotelianism. And the versions

of Aristotelianism in play in Aquinas's day included the very platonized systems of Avicenna and Averroes. Both of these thinkers held that reason (aka Aristotle) had proven that God produces the world by necessity. This is a core premise in their theoretical systems in which God is immutable and must produce an immutable effect. According to these Islamic Aristotelians God is everlasting in that He has always existed in the past and will always exist in the future. Neither is a four-dimensionalist, and so their God cannot be eternal in Anselm's sense. But this means that He (or It) must always be doing just what He has always done. Thus He cannot, at some point in time,

reach down into creation and effect a watershed event after which human history is forever changed. On the contrary, though there is change in that there is the cycle of birth and growth and death, the cycle itself must be without beginning or end, and must go on forever as it has always gone on.

This ‘Aristotelian’ position is obviously impossible to square with Christianity (or Judaism or Islam, for that matter). God’s action in history is the core of Christian belief. But positing that God ‘necessarily’ does the best does not, all by itself, entail these unappealing consequences. We saw in discussing freedom and foreknowledge that it was the

problem of the apparent contradiction between divine immutability and divine agency that led Augustine to meditate upon the nature of time in the famous passages in *Confessions* 11. It is not clear that in writing this text Augustine understood and embraced the view of divine eternity which entails four-dimensionalism. None the less, that view of time is certainly suggested, and adopting four-dimensionalism dispels the apparent contradiction. God can be both truly changeless and an agent acting at different times in history. All times are immediately present to God and God acts upon all times in His one, eternal, and immutable act. Anselm sees

this point clearly and embraces it wholeheartedly. Thus Anselm's account of God's 'necessary' creation is not encumbered by the unorthodox baggage which Aquinas and his confreres associate with the view.

Setting aside the historical context of the disagreement between Anselm and Aquinas, are there strictly philosophical reasons to conclude that it is theoretically preferable to follow Aquinas and suppose that God has freedom of indifference? There is certainly a cost. It is a very standard belief among Christians that God made the world out of love and according to His wisdom. There is an explanation for the existence of a world, and indeed *our* world:

God chooses that it should be so. But if God has freedom of indifference with regard to creation, then this is no explanation at all, since there is absolutely no reason why God chose our world over some other creation, or over none at all. His wisdom and love might equally have issued in a creation containing only well-ordered cosmic dust, or in no creation at all. So there is no answer to the question 'Why did God prefer our world to a world of dust or nothing?' He didn't. He just chose it.

The intelligibility problem was bad enough when the issue was created freedom. But in that context the cost of the intellectual

discomfort produced by the thesis of radically open options was outweighed by the benefit of a theoretical explanation for how a creature which exists *per aliud* might none the less have enough aseity to be the object of praise and blame. And there is a very important difference between the sort of options which can ground the morally significant freedom of a created agent and the sort of options which ground the freedom of indifference. With morally significant freedom, the choice is between good and bad such that the decision itself is partly constitutive of one's future character. For the latter, the options are in the relevant respects indiscernible, like the two bales of

hay between which Buridan's ass is in danger of starving to death. It really does not matter which is chosen. Ascribing freedom of indifference to God posits radical arbitrariness at the heart of creation such that there is no ultimate meaning or purpose to the world—at least no meaning or purpose that would not be equally fulfilled by a creation of cosmic dust or a lack of any creation at all. This seems a significant cost.

*[W. Matthews Grant addresses a version of this complaint about Aquinas's position. The complaint is that positing God as the cause of the existence of our universe fails as a real explanation if God might equally have made a different universe or no universe at all. Grant argues that libertarians, at least, cannot make this criticism stick since the*

*libertarian wants to claim that the act of the free agent provides an adequate causal explanation for his choice, and also that, with everything being equal, his choice could have been otherwise: ‘Must a cause be really related to its effect? The analogy between divine and libertarian agent causality’, Religious Studies 43 (2007), 1–23.* Grant makes a powerful case, but I would suggest that he has failed to see exactly what the complaint is. The Anselmian thinker says not just that God creates the universe but that God has a motivation for doing so. It is God’s love which issues in the created world. The claim is that if, *per impossibile*, God did not love, then our world would not exist. Now look at the case of the created agent, at least on Anselm’s understanding. He, too, acts from motives. If he did not have the desires which he has, he would not choose as he chooses. So the choice is causally explained by the desire. The choice is not necessitated by the desire in a case where the agent has conflicting desires. But a given desire plays a

*necessary role in the explanation for the choice, in that, absent that desire, the choice which realizes that desire would not exist. On Aquinas's understanding, the motivation which leads God to create the universe, His perfect goodness, might have led Him equally to create a different universe, or not to create at all. Thus the divine motivation does not seem to be desirous of our world as opposed to all the other options, and hence provides no explanation for why God made our world.]*

Absent the historical debate in which ‘necessity’ might be linked to a god who cannot act as an agent within creation, is this cost outweighed by some powerful philosophical benefit accruing to the thesis that God exercises freedom of indifference?

It is sometimes argued—Boso said something similar relevant to

the Incarnation in *Cur deus homo*—that if God creates as a matter of necessity, then we need not really be grateful. After all, He couldn't help Himself. But undoubtedly we do owe our Creator an enormous debt of gratitude, and so we must suppose that He might genuinely not have made us and our world. But the principle that the freedom of indifference is a good candidate for producing an act worthy of gratitude seems implausible, even on a human level. We ought to be grateful to our parents. Should we be less grateful if we discover that they had always wanted children and never considered remaining childless an option? Should we be more grateful if we discover that

they were literally indifferent and perhaps flipped a coin to decide whether or not to have children? The latter case might make us grateful to the coin, or to chance, but not to our parents. (Remember that if the issue is freedom of indifference, there is no question of the choice having moral significance.) That God considered the option to make us and our world as in no way preferable to the option to make a world of cosmic dust or nothing does not seem a special reason for gratitude.

But perhaps the issue is this: the God of traditional, classical theism is absolutely and necessarily perfect in every way. He cannot possibly be in need of anything. As

Aquinas understands choice, one wills a means to an end by necessity only if one cannot achieve one's end without it. But God does not need anything outside of Himself to make Him perfect, and so there can be no question of His willing creation by necessity. Certainly Anselm does not think that God 'needs' creation. He makes the point that the three persons of the Trinity have no need of each other, though their mutual relationships are necessary and could not possibly be otherwise. Anselm is simply starting from other (possibly more Platonic?) assumptions than is Aquinas. God does not see creation as a means to some further end. God's act of

creation is an outward-turning choice, not made from a need to perfect Himself, but simply because He wants the world to be. He loves creation not for what it can do for Him, but for itself. God ‘must’ create, not because creation *adds to* His perfection, but because it *expresses* it. True, Anselm apparently believes that God cannot fail to express Himself in creation, but the ‘cannot’ is a function not of some lack or need in God, but of His infinite and immutable goodness.

## COULD OUR WORLD BE THE BEST?

Can sense be made of the concept of a best actualizable world: a world that is, from the perspective

of divine creation, the best, given the actual choices of actual created agents? If the goodness of creation is a reflection of God, but God is infinite, then, must not all created worlds fall infinitely short of the divine, such that for any possible world, a better world is possible? So God is free to create any world, and is not to be faulted if He does not make a best, since that is impossible. First, it is not clear that the hypothesis that God is unable to produce a best created image of Himself enhances divine perfection. If such a thing is logically impossible, then of course God cannot do it. But divine freedom is usually held to be a valuable attribute. If God's freedom, at least as regards

creation, is simply the entailment of the logical impossibility of a best world, it is not clear that this freedom is really a positive power at all.

Further, it is not demonstrated that a best actualizable image of God is a genuine logical impossibility. On the Neoplatonic metaphysics within which Anselm is working, being *per se* is good. What makes the universe good is the variety of different creatures and the numbers of individuals. The best universe might consist in an infinite number of kinds and individuals. If such a universe is impossible, then perhaps God makes a universe containing the most compossible kinds and individuals. Or perhaps we might

follow Anselm's suggestion of a perfect number of kinds and individuals. To the contemporary philosopher the idea of a 'perfect number' might seem quaint and silly, but many of the giants on whose shoulders we sit—Augustine and Newton spring to mind—found it both a plausible and a useful concept. We should not label it nonsense without a hearing. From the Anselmian perspective the impossibility of a best actualizable world has yet to be proved.

Some might hold that our own world, where there is pain and suffering, death and decay, could not possibly be that best actualizable world. William Rowe, who argues that if there is a God,

then this must in fact be the best possible world, expresses the view that, ‘Given the evils we know to exist, the idea that the world we live in is the best possible world seems an absurd idea.’ Anselm, of course, attributes a great deal of the evil in our world to free will. Ours is not the best possible world, but only the best actualizable world given the bad behavior of created agents. Created freedom is so valuable that it is worth the cost. Without it we simply could not be *imagines dei*. And Anselm, like Boethius, is willing to allow that, given the nature of created agents, some suffering can have a beneficial impact on them.

But what of the suffering which

falls entirely outside the scope of created agency? The free will defense cannot be invoked to deal with the suffering which is unconnected in any way to created agents. For example, what of Rowe's famous fawn, burning to death in great pain? Surely God could have actualized a world without such suffering. The standard response of traditional, classical theists, such as Augustine and Aquinas, is that the suffering is a necessary part of the system, and a world without it would not really be a better place. I think it is safe to say that Anselm, too, would subscribe to this view. A developed defense of the classical response would take us too far afield, but a very quick sketch of

how such a defense might go is in order just to suggest that the claim that ours is the best actualizable world is not obviously absurd.

The first point to note is that many popular contemporary conceptions of the good and the bad are very different from the classical conception. Rowe, and many today, take it that the most fundamental good is located in the feelings or attitudes or behaviors of sentient subjects. Rowe says that some states of affairs ‘... are intrinsically good by virtue of containing intrinsically good qualities such as happiness, love, enjoyment, beauty, good intentions, or the exercise of virtue’. Bad states of affairs exhibit the contrary properties,

unhappiness, etc. And then there are intrinsically neutral states of affairs. Rowe says that, ‘*There being stones* [Rowe’s italics], for example, is a state of affairs that contains little if any intrinsic value.’

This is not at all the traditional, classical theist conception of the good. For Augustine and Anselm and Aquinas, the fundamental good is existence. It is good and valuable simply to be. *There being stones* is not a neutral state of affairs. It is a very good thing, in that stones exist. A universe which was only cosmic dust would be a good universe. But on the traditional understanding, besides thinking of being as the on/off quality of existing versus not

existing, there are degrees of being. Things can have a fuller and richer sort of existence, or a thinner, poorer sort of existence. There is a ‘Great Chain of Being’ such that the more, basic, positive qualities a thing has, the better it is. A rock is good, but a plant is better since plants both exist and live. A sentient animal is higher on the scale of being than a plant in virtue of having consciousness in addition to existence and life, and humans are higher still in that we have existence, life, consciousness, and reason.

Certainly all of those qualities which Rowe lists as good are thought to be good on this classical understanding. But they are goods which depend upon the

more fundamental good of existence. Take human happiness, for example. Augustine and Anselm and Aquinas reiterate and enlarge upon Aristotle's position that happiness lies in the flourishing of the human being as the kind of thing it is. Happiness is actualizing human potentials and 'being all that you can be'. Happiness, then, is a sort of fulfilling one's existence. But this flourishing just is what morally good behavior consists in. 'Ought' is a subset of 'is'.

And the tradition holds that pain and suffering are not the basic evils, in that one who is suffering may live a good life. Fundamental evil is what destroys the being of a thing. In terms of 'natural' evil the

medievals tended to be more concerned with destruction than suffering. And when the question is moral evil, the medievals focus on sin rather than suffering. The core evil in human existence is sin, which destroys the proper relationship with God, and hence corrupts or diminishes the sinner's own nature. On Anselm's account sin introduces a 'nothing' where justice ought to be. By this understanding, the wicked do more damage to themselves by sinning than they do to their victims in causing suffering. Certainly it is a terribly pressing question why God allows suffering. But contemporary philosophy of religion's frequent equation of the good mainly with

positive subjective states and evil mainly with suffering has wrenched the discussion of good and evil out of its traditional foundations, and the tradition ought to be at least given a hearing. In terms of the issue in question, the suffering which is unrelated to created agents, what counts as an adequate analysis has a great deal to do with which conception of the good we adopt.

What, then, of the suffering fawn? On the traditional understanding, it is a great good that deer exist. And it is a great good that fire exists. These are good not just as useful to us, but in themselves. To be a deer is to be a mortal, sentient thing of a certain sort. Pain is an essential part of the

life of sentient things in that it motivates them to protect their existence. Might not a diminution of pleasure do the same job? There is no evidence that it would. It is the nature of fire to burn. The meeting of the fire and the fawn spells pain and death for the fawn. Would it be a better universe in which such things did not happen? That means a universe in which there are not fawns and fires. But the fawn, even though it must suffer and die, is a good thing, and it is not clear that it would thank us for wishing it out of being. The fire, even though it can cause pain and destruction, is a good as well. On the traditional understanding the entire interrelated causal system which is our physical

universe is a very good thing. It is part of the causal nature of the things in the world that some should suffer and decay, but the things themselves are very good, and the whole universe is better for their existence. Anselm, recall, will not have us suppose that the life of the lowliest worm is superfluous. Augustine waxes almost lyrical on the goodness of maggots. His point is that those who find fault with the natural processes of the world have not considered them carefully enough.

I am not sure to what extent it is possible to mount an argument in defense of this traditional view against the contemporary approach represented by Rowe. There seems to be a fundamental

difference in intuitions at work. Augustine and his like see the world as an ordered and beautiful place, in which even some pain and suffering plays a necessary role. Anselm, of course, holds that the pain and suffering caused by sin should not have happened, but the issue here is the suffering which is not attributable to wickedness. Other philosophers, Hume springs to mind, have found the physical universe a hideous place in which ‘the curious artifices of Nature. . . embitter the life of every living being’ and ‘the whole earth ... is cursed and polluted’. Contemporary philosophers of religion who find it obviously absurd that our world might be

the best seem to be tending towards the Humean view. How to decide between these opposing perspectives?

It certainly cannot be charged that in general the late classical and medieval thinkers had less experience of day-to-day suffering than do contemporary philosophers. A glance at a text on medieval dentistry makes that case. And the great theodicists of the period had faced tremendous personal tragedy. Boethius wrote his *Consolations* in prison, having lost everything, and awaiting a brutal execution. Augustine had suffered the death of his beloved son, Adeodatus, when the boy was 17. On the question of animal suffering, there is no reason to

suppose that Hume had a more tender affection for, or greater appreciation of, animals than did the medievals. Moreover, the medieval view that the physical universe is a beautiful, orderly, and valuable thing seems to be the ‘scientific’ attitude. That is, when you hear scientists talk about the objects of their study, be it galactic clusters, sub-atomic particles, or naked African mole rats, they tend to evince an enthusiasm and excitement that conveys the impression that they think these objects intrinsically worth studying, valuable in themselves. The contemporary philosopher—and the scientist himself when he is doing philosophy rather than

science—may say that the beauty in the objects of scientific study is really in the eye of the scientist. However, the manner of the scientist suggests that he believes he has discovered value in the world, not imposed it on the world.

*[This harmony of the attitudes of science and traditional, classical theism is summed up nicely in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Section 341: ‘The beauty of the universe: the order and harmony of the created world results from the diversity of beings and from the relationships which exist among them. Man discovers them progressively as the laws of nature. They call forth the admiration of scholars. The beauty of creation reflects the infinite beauty of the Creator and ought to inspire the respect and submission of man’s intellect and will.’]*

Yes there is suffering, but it may be a necessary part of a physical system which, in the final analysis, could not be better. Add to all of the above a wholesome dose of humility regarding our claims to know the world, and it is not wildly implausible to suppose that, should a best actualizable world be logically coherent, ours may be it.

On Anselm's understanding, God does not have morally significant freedom or freedom of indifference. He inevitably does what is best. That there is a best actualizable world is not an incoherent suggestion, and, at least on the traditional conception of the good, it is not obvious madness to suppose that our

world is that best actualizable world. So the claim that there is a God who does the best is not absurd. Moreover, God is free by Anselm's definition: He has the power to keep justice for its own sake. And in bestowing on His created agents the open options which constitute morally significant freedom, He has granted them a measure of aseity by which they may share in that power and so pursue the goal for which they were made, to become ever closer images of God.

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